

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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On May 21, 1998 Kip Kinkel drove to Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon. Kinkel killed two students and wounded another twenty-two students. He killed his parents the day before. The shootings at Thurston High School came on the heels of a number of prominent school shootings and Kip Kinkel provoked tremendous attention from the media.

In an attempt to understand how the media told the story of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School, Ernest G. Bormann's fantasy theme analysis is

used as a critical model. To generate insight into the rhetorical visions present in the media coverage articles from three newspapers, The Register-Guard, The Oregonian and The New York Times, are studied. Fantasy types and themes including characters, settings and plotlines are identified and explored.

A literature study provides information about the media and how it functions in telling stories, particularly those focused on crime.

The critical evaluation of the fantasy themes and types at work the three newspapers provide a number of conclusions. Two rhetorical visions are revealed and discussed. Specific strengths and weaknesses of fantasy theme analysis are also discussed. Finally, a number of future research possibilities are suggested.

Finding Fantasy: Three Newspapers Tell the Story of
Kip Kinkel and Thurston High

by

Josie MaryAnne Soules Wood

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION1
ANALYSIS	41
The Settings53
Springfield56
Finding Springfield . . . . .	.60
The School	62
The Cafeteria . . . . .	.65
The Churches	68
The Funerals	69
The Courtroom . . . . .	.72
The Characters . . . . .	.74
The Villain . . . . .	.74
Heroes	86
Beyond Hero and Villain . . . . .	.90
Faith and Bill Kinkel . . . . .	.91
Mikael Nickolauson	95
Ben Walker	97
Other Victims . . . . .	.99
Public Safety Personnel	101
The Faithful . . . . .	.104
Other Minor Characters . . . . .	.106
Kristin Kinkel . . . . .	.107
The Plotlines . . . . .	.109
Tracing a School Shooting	109
Trying to Answer the Question: Why? . . . . .	.110
Experts' Accounts	113
The Crime	119
Finding the Fantasy . . . . .	.123

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
INTERPRETATION . . . . .	.126
Finding the Rhetorical Vision . . . . .	.126
The Fantasy of the Good Life Gone Awry	129
The Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place	154
Considering the Visions . . . . .	.170
CONCLUSIONS	173
Limitations . . . . .	.175
Implications for Future Research . . . . .	.188
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	.192

This thesis is dedicated to the victims of the shootings at
Thurston High School, including those of us who only had
our hearts broken,

and

to the first responders of America who have their hearts
broken all too often.

Finding Fantasy: Three Newspapers Tell the Story of
Kip Kinkel and Thurston High School

INTRODUCTION

*All of us are asleep. By telling stories, we are
awakened - a Jewish saying*

Recent school shootings in the US have resulted in what some researchers would probably recognize as moral panics. Moral panic, defined by Stanley Cohen in 1972, serves to reassert the dominance of an established value system at a time of perceived anxiety and crisis. Thompson argues that in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a heightening of social tensions and anxieties revealed by the escalation of media-induced moral panics. Thompsons' list of moral panics includes: baby-battering and child abuse, welfare cheats, raves and youth drug culture, pornography, 'home alone' children, children who murder, violence in schools, and the availability of knives and handguns. While Thompson is primarily writing of moral panics in Great Britain, there seems little doubt that the United States has experienced similar moral panics. Thompson points out that "a frequent refrain accompanying the moral panics is about moral permissiveness, the loss of values, lack

of discipline and respect for authority, and loss of responsibility (particularly on the part of women)." In moral panics, there are always culprits, which can include youths and children. McNair adds that the media's role as "reality-defining" institutions has increased in the case of late-twentieth-century moral panics:

They have become synonymous with the public sphere - that intermediate zone between governors and the governed where public opinion is formed and reformed. The journalistic media are the main source of our information about politics and public affairs in general (what other sources do we have if we are not political activists?) as well as setting the agenda (55).

In the case of recent school shootings in the United States, the elements of a moral panic are all there; the scape-goating, the arguing about the cause, the solution and the question of who is to blame. The perpetrators and the majority of the victims in the school shootings are children. Media coverage of the events has been particularly saturating. The purpose of this study is to investigate the fantasy themes that developed in the media following one school shooting. Specifically, this study will focus on the newspaper

coverage surrounding the shootings at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon, by Kip Kinkel. The morning after Kinkel killed his parents, he went to school. He took two guns with him. When Kinkel left school that morning, two boys were dead and another twenty-two students were wounded. Springfield joined the ranks of Pearl, Paducha, and Jonesboro as American towns famous for school shootings. Not quite a year later, Columbine joined their ranks.

On May 21, 1998, Kinkel catapulted Springfield to the front page of newspapers across the country and brought CNN and every other major network and newsgathering organization to town. The shootings at Thurston High School were *NEWS*. The violence was worthy of not only presidential comment but also a presidential visit. And it was all worth hundreds of inches of copy. According to The Register-Guard, there were as many as 400 journalists from as far away as Japan and Australia in Springfield two days after the shooting to cover it (Buri, "Some weary of media" 7A). Area hotels were booked to capacity, and one of the local hospitals turned a cafeteria into a room for the media (Buri, "Some weary of media" 7A). The evening of

May 21 found US West workers installing 25 temporary phone lines outside the school to provide journalists with the means to file stories and send faxes (Buri, "Community faces blitz" 4C). Springfield, Thurston High, the victims, and Kinkel found themselves the center of massive media attention, something common to the other schools and communities involved in school shootings. By comparison, John Schwartz, a Washington Post reporter who covered the Jonesboro school shootings, for instance, estimates that there were about 100 print and television journalists from around the world waiting outside the courthouse where the two juvenile suspects were going to be arraigned the day following the shootings (5).

Crime coverage, especially juvenile crime and school shootings, generates both attention and copy in the media. Some sources argue that the coverage of law enforcement represents more than half of all news stories, with numbers even higher in local markets (Vance 1997). The modern definition of news has been shaped in part by crime. "[N]ews usually involves conflict and whatever is bizarre, sensational or deviant; and crime clearly is deviant behavior" (Dennis

xii). Research indicates that murder represents a high percentage of crime coverage. Based on his analysis, Chermak found that nearly one-fourth of the crimes mentioned within crime stories were murders (53). Crime victims presented in the media are most likely to be male, white and between the ages of 17 and 25 (Chermak 59). Chermak further concludes that there is evidence that young victims (0-12 years old) are over-represented in crime coverage. David Doi, the executive director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, and the national coalition for State Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups, notes that 40 percent of stories newspapers publish about children are related to violence (31). This ties in to the fact that the victimization of students, politicians, and helping professionals appear to be more newsworthy than those of people with service or labor jobs (Chermak 59). The added emotion youth brings to a story encourages the media to present victimized children as losing their innocence because of the system's failure to protect them (Chermak 67). Simon argues that the saturating coverage of crime is responsible for the media's focus on crimes that represent extremes: "Repeatedly bludgeoned with crime

and violence by every medium, our culture is now so bored with ordinary tragedy that we only become excited by those crimes that are larger, more unlikely and more bizarre" (39).

As Simon hints, the coverage is not always an accurate reflection of statistical reality. Doi notes that between 1992 and 1994, only one percent of violent deaths of children happened at school; 99 percent occurred somewhere else. In fact, Doi says that eleven children were shot and killed in Pearl, West Paducah, Jonesboro, Edinboro, Penn., and Springfield. While in 1994, there were an average of eleven children killed in two days by their parents/guardians (Doi 4).

Regardless of whether their stories are reflections of the statistical reality or not, by dramatizing juvenile crimes, the media assumes one of humankind's most ancient roles: storyteller. In After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, Alasdair MacIntyre writes that "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal" (201). Schank and Abelson say that it is stories that people know and understand best. Fisher also sees a connection between people and stories:

"[N]arrative, whether written or oral, is a feature of human nature and. . .it crosses time and culture"

(279). To be human is to tell stories. Whose story is heard and whose story is long remembered, however, is subject to hierarchy. Fisher notes: "History records no community, uncivilized or civilized, without key story-makers/story-tellers, whether sanctioned by God, a 'gift,' heritage, power, intelligence, or election"

(280). Today, members of the media enjoy the position of being both key story-tellers and often key story-makers. Both are powerful roles. They are roles that David Broder, a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter with the Washington Post says journalists are often reluctant to embrace:

[W]e resist admitting that -- reporters, broadcasters, editors, or producers -- we do exercise great influence in this society, preferring to see ourselves as simple scribes, recording the words and actions of others. It is so much easier that way. But it is an act of self-deception. . .(13).

Rosen agrees that journalists do not just give people the facts. He writes that "they frame and narrate the story of our common life" (5).

It is the narration of a community's common life that sets newspapers apart from some other forms of mass media. Most towns and cities are served by at least one local newspaper and often a larger regional newspaper as well. In addition, there are larger market papers that dominate the market as newspapers of prestige or certainly high circulation numbers and a prominent reputation. On the local level, newspapers record the collective life of their individual community: "Although long overshadowed by the national media, local news has always played an important role in the way a city and region understands its problems, its opportunities, and its sense of local identity" (Kannis 2). In fact, the local newspaper's economic stability rests "on their ability to link their audiences in a common bond of local identity" (Kannis 3). The record of community news that a newspaper collects is usually permanent, one revisited by historians and scholars conducting research and community members looking back in scrapbooks. As The Commission on Freedom of the Press noted in 1947, a journalist's report lasts for more than just the day it is printed. The committee wrote, "Yet, just because it

is the day's report of itself, it is the permanent word of that day to all other days." The committee added that people "get their picture of one another through the press" (4). In Four Theories of the Press Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm argue "that the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (1). The authors also argue that differences between the press of different countries "reflect simply what people do in different places and what their experience leads them to want to read about" (1). The same can surely be said about communities in the same nation. To a certain extent the needs, desires and culture of any community should be reflected in their newspaper. According to Simon, "[J]ournalists are supposed to be the great storytellers of every age" (39). He further asserts that "[h]istorians will produce the more exacting versions long after anyone ceases to care. . . Reporters, we like to tell ourselves, are there every day to tell the tale first" (39). So newspapers' stories serve not just as a permanent record, or as a sort of scrap book of life as

it was through the eyes of those who told the story, but as a picture of how the world is at that moment.

The reality is, of course, a mediated one. It would be foolish to suggest that the picture is always accurate or that one vision truly captures reality. Although it is a mediated reality, news accounts become "a record of and the accepted version of past events" (Koch 20). As Tuchman writes, "the act of making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality" (12). For Tuchman news "draws on aspects of everyday life to tell stories, and it presents us to ourselves" (12). Reality may be elusive, but as Tuchman illustrates, the stories that people use to create their reality are not so hard to find, especially in the pages of a newspaper. Newspapers then reveal how journalists and their sources see reality. As many researchers have posited, the media's reporting reflect a community's characteristics and concerns while reinforcing the existing social order and reflecting those themes back to the audience (Corbett 936). McNair agrees that journalism creates reality:

What journalism is, or aspires to be, is revealed truth, mediated reality, an account

of the existing, real world as appropriated by the journalist and processed in accordance with the particular requirements of the journalistic medium through which it will be disseminated to some section of the public (9).

Distortion, Broder writes, is always a risk in the news business: "Even when we are accurate. . .even when we are fairly detailed in our descriptions, even when we are fairly sophisticated in putting the event in context, the news we deliver can fall short of the truth" (49).

Rhetorical critics have long been interested in the role the media play in creating rhetorical visions. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, for instance, has explored the relationship between politics and the media a number of times, including in her latest book Everything You Think You Know About Politics. . .And Why You're Wrong. Barbara F. Sharf discussed the media and their coverage of psychiatry during the trial of John Hinckley, following his attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan. Ernest G. Bormann has explored how fantasies chain out through the media several times. His critical essays have provided insight into political events such as the Eagleton affair, the role

of political cartoons in presidential campaigns, and the coverage of the release of hostages against the backdrop of Reagan's inaugural address. As Hall Jamieson and Bormann demonstrate, national politics is a particularly well-researched area. The role of the national media dominates such research. Kannis supports this point, writing that her study "represents the first comprehensive examination of the local news-making process. . ." (8). It is not just local news that has been neglected by researchers, although crime dominates much of today's news, research does not reflect that reality. According to LaMay and Dennis, crime is the "most common and least studied staple of news" (1).

The work that communication scholars have done in utilizing rhetorical criticism to analyze the role the media plays, particularly in politics, demonstrates that the theories of rhetorical criticism are applicable to media coverage of events. Bormann, and a group of researchers following in his mold, have demonstrated the appropriateness of his methodology, fantasy theme analysis, to serve in critical examinations of news coverage. In 1982, Bormann used

fantasy theme analysis to examine the intertwined television coverage of the release of American hostages held in Iran and the inaugural of Ronald Reagan as president of the United States. Although Bormann focuses on television coverage, he notes that "newspaper accounts of the inaugural are also clearly fantasy themes" ("Hostage Release" 134). In fact, he turns to the Minneapolis Tribune to confirm that the fantasy of renewal had indeed chined out. Bormann concludes that "if fantasy theme analysis can be applied to such (news) messages it will appreciably enlarge the scope of the method and make possible the application of findings from studies of rhetorical fantasies in other contexts to them" (145).

In her analysis of the imagery of psychiatry during the Hinckley trial, Scharf, relying on newspapers and nationally circulated magazines, ignored transcripts of the courtroom. She argues that the significance of a shared rhetorical vision is found in the material that is provided to the public: "Although they may be criticized for distorting, the mass media serve as a screen that selects and presents an unwieldy environment to us in ways we can manage and understand"

(83). The public, she adds, learned about Hinckley's trial through media accounts, not through direct observation. The result of that media coverage, according to Scharf, was an overall vision formed from five interlocking fantasy types. That vision portrayed psychiatrists as "on the take, neither credible nor comprehensible, and their discipline as without true scholarship, scientific methods, or effective treatment techniques" (Sharf 91). While the fantasy themes of psychiatrists were not new, they chained out so extensively because of the "severe blow" that the societal order received when Hinckley received the not guilty by reason of insanity for his attempted assassination of President Reagan "further emphasized the descent into chaos for surely something or someone had to be held responsible for the damages" (91). Denied the chance to blame Hinckley, psychiatry "became the perfect scapegoat" and "the public was able to feel cleansed and have a sense that the social order was restored" (91).

A number of researchers have turned to fantasy theme analysis to study presidential politics. Rarick, Duncan, Lee, and Porter also use Bormann's method to

analyze campaign materials generated by both the media journalists and the Carter and Ford campaigns in their exploration of the persona of President Jimmy Carter. Cragan and Shields also considered the 1976 campaign. Both groups of researchers considered the campaign through fantasy theme analysis and a Q-sort¹ based on

¹Q-Methodology was developed by William Stephenson and explored in his 1953 book The Study of Behavior: Q-Technique and Its Methodology. The objective of Q-methodology is to allow studies to explore single cases, or as Stephenson writes, "a single person under study or a single group of interacting people" (2). This means that large groups of people are not necessary for Q-studies. "The concern is not that of discovering something about a particular population or universe of statements as such in relation to a particular population of persons." (343). Stephenson illustrates Q-sorts' focus on "concrete behavior and the single case" with a particular chair. According to Stephenson, the desire of Q is to understand "how a particular chair. . .fits into a particular room" (345). Q-Methodology relies on factor analysis as well as other statistical methods to define certain facts about the case under study (6). According to Stephenson, "Factor analysis is used to test propositions, and variance analysis to explain them (and to offer some proof of the explanations).

According to Stephenson, the method can allow researchers to explore "many different regions of study, with respect to aesthetics, attitudes, thinking behavior, self-reflections, and every conceivable form of human behavior, individual or group" and then make correlations between people (19). In the procedure, factors are first found and then explained (21). The Q-researcher begins with a question for instance, "what happens when a student X attempts to solve a series of jigsaw puzzles which are complicated enough to permit of observations being made (i) by outside observers, of the manipulatory behavior displayed by X, and (ii) by X himself of his own behavior" (18). The researchers then develop "say, 60 verbal statements, descriptive of manipulative behavior, of the following kind: (1) picks up pieces randomly, (2) makes the same mistaken moves over and over again. . ." (18). Each statement is written on a card. The cards are then

media accounts. Bormann, along with Kroll, Watters, and McFarland, turned to the Q-sort/Fantasy Theme Analysis combination to study the 1980 presidential campaign. Like Rarick et al., Bormann and his fellow researchers relied on the presidential campaign persuasion and media coverage of the election to perform their study. This combined methodology led Rarick et al. to conclude that "mass media campaign events influence voters because listeners come to share the fantasies in media dramas much as members of groups come to share fantasies in their face-to-face discussion" (272). While focusing on foreign policy, Cragan and Shields concluded, "the utility of Bormann's theory of rhetorical vision goes beyond its use as a descriptive schemata for critiquing rhetorical communication. It may provide us with a *why* explanation of communication phenomena that is predictive" (280).

shuffled and the observers, as well as the students, describe the latter's performance "in terms of the statements by marking them for (a) their *incidence*, (b) their *significance*, (c) the *frequency* of their occurrence in the performance or the like conditions of instructions, using a forced frequency of distribution of scores" (19). Stephenson explains that the arrays of scores for the $n = 60$ sample can then be correlated and factored (19).

Earlier, Bormann used fantasy theme analysis alone to examine the media coverage of the McGovern campaign and vice presidential candidate Eagleton in the 1972 presidential campaign. Bormann posited that his analysis of the major fantasies that chained though the American electorate "reveals the awesome power of the electronic media to provide, in the form of breaking news, the dramatizations that cause fantasies to chain though large section of the American electorate. . . ." (254). Bormann notes that Eagleton's nervous exhaustion was top priority for all three major television networks. The Eagleton story generated so much attention, Bormann writes, because it "had the human interest required to chain out in all directions through the American electorate" (258).

Bormann's conclusion that human interest played a role in the fantasies' chaining out points to the heart of fantasy theme analysis. It is dramatistic in nature. It is based on the assumption that fantasies are dramas complete with actors, settings, and scenes. Bormann sought to explore how these competing stories develop. Fantasy theme analysis emerged from Bormann's combination of elements from Kenneth Burke's dramatism

and research on small groups by psychologist Robert Bales. According to Bormann, fantasies contained in speeches can "chain out" through larger audiences and end up affecting entire societies or nations. Exploring the fantasy reveals the rhetor's view of reality, and allows the critic to determine how realistic the vision is by examining how it chains out. This includes examining who begins using the fantasy and how they use it. Newspaper stories operate under the same assumption. Reporters are taught to ask and answer the five Ws: who, what, when, where, why, and how. As Border observes, news stories inevitably involve characters engaged in some action against some backdrop:

Reporters are essentially storytellers, heirs to a narrative tradition as old as mankind. Stories have settings and characters and plot lines. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are constantly devising the scripts we think appropriate for the events we are covering (28).

Newspapers do not always tell the same story as one another, or there may be differences in what the audience holds to be true and the story related in the

pages. People find different ways to explain their world; they use competing stories to explain reality.

Researchers consistently find that people learn things from the news and there is evidence that how news is reported shapes people's perceptions of reality. Agenda setting research, Joseph N. Capella and Hall Jamieson write, "reports a consistent correlation between topics the news media treat and problems the public identified as salient" (51). There can be little doubt that the media impacts the world around it. The media is a powerful force in shaping cultures, society, and people's views of reality. The increasing globalization of the world increases the number of stories to which people have access. While it used to be that a local story stayed local, or at least took a great deal of time to travel outside the community it originated in, today stories fly around the world in only minutes. By 1947, The Commission on Freedom of Press noted this: "In a simpler order of society published accounts of events within the experience of the community could be compared with other sources of information. Today this is usually impossible" (22). As a result, the media has an increased responsibility.

According to the commission, "It is no longer enough to report *the fact* truthfully. It is now necessary to report *the truth about the fact*. . . A single incident will be accepted as a sample of group action unless the press has given a flow of information and interpretation. . . to enable the reader to set a single event in its proper perspective" (22-23).

The same globalization that makes local news accessible beyond its point of origin creates other stresses. Researchers argue that this globalization creates uncertainty in people, which results in increasing social pluralization and cultural fragmentation. These, Thompson says have "undermined traditional social and cultural hierarchies." His contention is backed up by research conducted by Robert Putnam that finds that Americans are less involved in communal activities. Involvement in PTAs, neighborhood groups, and bowling leagues has all undergone a long-term decline (Putnam 65-78). Rosen extends this point even to the structures we choose for organizing suburbs:

Suspicious and resentful of large institutions, citizens are also becoming

strangers to one another as they interact less often in public settings. Perhaps the starkest symbol of this pattern is the rise of so-called private communities, walled off from the rest of society by security guards and iron gates (4).

Like Putnam, Janeway sees Americans experiencing a "broad disillusionment" with public life. Janeway blames the disillusionment on "the accumulation of trauma and loss Americans have experienced since the 1960s" (4). According to Janeway, Watergate and Vietnam were particularly responsible for the United States' "cumulative loss, since the 1960s, of confident command of its destiny abroad and at home, and Americans' cumulative loss of confidence in their institutions and leadership" (3).

That loss of confidence in institutions and leadership has also resulted in a citizenry that is often indifferent or even averse to the news (Janeway 3). As Janeway writes, "A paradox of modern American life is that as the news media grew ever more effective, efficient and accessible, readers and viewers turned away" (2). In 1970, 77.6 percent of all adults (people 18 and over) read a newspaper each day (*Facts About Newspapers 2000, Weekday Readers*). In

1999, that number had dropped to 56.9 percent. Another national study conducted in March 1995, found that only 45 percent of Americans had read a daily newspaper the day before (Rosen 19). That figure was down from 58 percent in February 1994 and from 71 percent in a comparable study in 1965 (Rosen 19). Circulation is not the only hit newspapers have taken. The public's confidence in the news media has fallen as well. A "Newsweek" Poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates in June 2000 found that only 10 percent of those surveyed had a great deal of confidence in the news media (pollingreport.com). Of those polled, 11 percent had quite a lot of confidence in the media, while 40 percent had some, 31 percent little and seven percent had none. Another poll from May 2000 conducted for Fox News/Opinion found that just 28 percent of people ranked journalists as very high when they were asked to rank the honesty and ethical standards of people in a variety of different fields (pollingreport.com). Journalists ranked the same as federal government employees and higher than lawyers, union leaders, stockbrokers, professional athletes, insurance executives, actors, politicians, prostitutes

and car salesman. A November 1999 Gallup Poll that also asked people to rank the honesty and ethical standards of different professions found that journalists in general were ranked very high or high by 24 percent of those polled (pollingreport.com). TV reporters/commentators were ranked in that category by 20 percent while newspaper reporters garnered 19 percent.

Despite people's apathy and distrust toward the media, there is no question it remains powerful. Members of the mass media are not just observers and reflectors of the world around them, they are "political players and definers of reality" (Hackett, et. al 15). In the past four years, school violence, and school shootings in particular have generated a tremendous amount of media coverage. The school shooting in Springfield, Oregon, was one of the shootings included in that coverage. Although a more detailed look at the tremendous breadth of coverage would undoubtedly be interesting, this study will focus on how three competing newspapers covered the story. Specifically, I will examine coverage from the Eugene Register Guard, The Oregonian and The New York Times.

The three newspapers were chosen because they represent a local newspaper, a regional newspaper, and a national newspaper. In addition, all three newspapers are daily newspapers, which provided each newspaper with more or less equal opportunity to report on the shootings at Thurston High School.

According to Editor and Publisher's 1999 "International Year Book," The New York Times had a circulation of 1,066,540 in 1998 (Maddux xiii). According to the "Year Book," only three newspapers, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the Los Angeles Times had higher circulation in the fall of 1998 (xi). In 2000, The New York Times, with 1,986,293 readers, ranked slightly ahead of the Los Angeles Times in circulation (Facts About Newspapers 2000). The New York Times publishes the Sunday paper with the highest circulation in America and is considered a newspaper of record for the nation (Maddux xii). The New York Times' national edition serves the entire country, including Alaska and Hawaii, as well as Mexico City, the Caribbean and parts of Canada ("International Year Book" I-301).

For its part, only 25 Sunday newspapers are more widely circulated than The Oregonian (Maddux xii). The Oregonian has a Monday through Saturday circulation of 335,244 and a Sunday circulation of 436,111 (Maddux I-374). Based in Portland, The Oregonian is the largest regional newspaper in Oregon and southwestern Washington State. The Register-Guard is published in Eugene and serves Lane County, including the city of Springfield, Oregon. Its weekday circulation is at 82,941, with a Sunday circulation of 78,077 (Maddux I-371).

This study is concerned with understanding how those three newspapers told the story of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School. Based on the understanding that newspapers not only reflect but actually create reality, this study seeks to understand the movement of the narrative constructed to explain Thurston High School and Kip Kinkel across the newspapers and their regions. The coverage of each newspaper from May 21 to May 27, 1998 and Nov. 3 to Nov. 12, 1999 will be considered. The first time period includes the day of the shootings and the week immediately following. The second time period focuses

on Kinkel's sentencing following his plea agreement with the prosecution. Kinkel's sentencing hearing began Nov. 3, and he was sentenced on Nov. 12. Using Fantasy Theme Analysis will allow the identification of the fantasies developed in the three newspapers. It will also illuminate the differences in those fantasies. Armed with an understanding of what the fantasies are and how they differ, will allow for a second exploration into why the fantasies that emerge chain out. This thesis will seek to reveal the rhetorical purposes for the shifts in the fantasies.

In 1972, the Quarterly Journal of Speech published Bormann's "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" and fantasy theme analysis was born. In his seminal paper, Bormann used the research findings of Robert Bales and the small group communication seminar at Minnesota to develop a critical theory. His theory was based on Bales' discovery of "the dynamic process of group fantasizing." Bales discovered "group fantasy events" where some, but not all, narratives would chain out through the group being studied. As the chaining out occurred, "the tempo of conversation would pick up. People would grow excited, interrupt one another,

blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness"

(Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 242).

Based on Bales' finding, Bormann created both a theory and a method. Symbolic convergence theory assumes that communication creates reality and that humans are social storytellers. It further assumes that there is a connection between the symbols people use and the reality they experience. Foss explains it by saying, "Symbols create reality because of their capacity to introduce form into our disordered sensory experience. They allow us to see a substance or an idea, to make it 'real' for us, because they halt the constant flux of consciousness by fixing a substance with a linguistic label" (Foss, Foss, Trapp 328). In the same vein, the theory also assumes that different people's meanings for symbols can come together, converging to create a shared reality. When the audience of a mass media outlet share a fantasy, the members experience what Bormann terms a symbolic convergence. ". . .they jointly experience the same emotions, develop common heroes and villains, celebrate certain actions as laudable, and interpret some aspect of their common experience" (Bormann, "Homo Narrans"

131). This sharing of a dramatized message results in both a group fantasy and the fantasy theme.

Fantasy theme is the basic unit of analysis for both Bormann's theory and his method. Fantasy, in this sense, does not mean something imaginary. Rather, the technical meaning of fantasy "is the creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need" (Bormann, The Force of Fantasy 5). This interpretation is accomplished through communication. For Bormann, communication is laden with meaning and motive. Bormann argues that motive is not only found in the minds and hearts of people but in the message itself:

In a very important way meanings are in messages. When the members of a group chain out a fantasy they emerge from the meeting with new meanings that may not have existed before, else how can we account for novelty and innovation. The new meanings are embedded in the messages created during the meeting ("Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 406).

Later he writes, "Finally, and most importantly, motives are in the message. . . Motives do not exist to be expressed in communication but rather arise in the expression itself and come to be embedded in the drama

of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them" ("Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 406).

Bormann defines the message as dramatic in both his theory and his method. He sees messages and fantasies as replete with characters, settings, and actions, just like any other drama. According to Bormann, symbolic convergence theory develops its strength from people's need to understand events:

The power of the symbolic convergence theory stems from the human tendency to try to understand events in terms of people with certain personality traits and motivations, people who make decisions, take actions, and cause things to happen. We can understand a person making plans in order to achieve goals and succeeding or failing to do so, because we often interpret our own behavior in that way in our personal fantasies (Force of Fantasy 9).

Poole argues that a strength of the symbolic convergence perspective is "that it applies to the whole range of group process - task and socioemotional. The theory combines rhetorical and social scientific perspectives and is therefore well suited for the study of group cultures" (240).

Since it is based on symbolic convergence theory, fantasy theme analysis also assumes that people symbolically create a shared view of reality through communication. Rhetorical communities, composed of those who participate in the vision, develop shared fantasies, or realities. These stories then become the way that people know their world. In turn, this view of reality guides community members' actions. As people begin to share and extend fantasy explanations of people, actions, things, objects and events, they build up a composite dramatistic explanation of reality. As a rhetorical vision grows in acceptance and breadth, participants will become more and more engrossed in the vision, developing additional themes and stories that fit that vision of reality. For Bormann this ability to interpret events is what allows people to make sense of their world:

Interpreting events in terms of human action allows us to assign responsibility, to praise or blame, to arouse and propitiate guilt, to hate and to love. When we share a fantasy, we make sense out of what prior to that time may have been a confusing state of affairs and we do so in common with others who share the fantasy with us. Thus, we come to symbolic convergence on the matter and envision that part of our world in similar

ways. We have created some symbolic common ground, and we can talk with one another about that shared interpretation with code words or brief allusions along the lines of the symbolic cue phenomenon (Force of Fantasy 9).

Fantasy theme is the smallest unit of analysis. Fantasy themes are key words that spark the fantasy chain. "Watergate," "Dec. 7," "working mothers" are all words or phrases that are capable of sparking fantasies in an audience. The next element of fantasy theme analysis is the fantasy type. Fantasy types tend to fall into three categories. These three categories, setting, characters, and actions, are seen in any drama. There are "characters, real and fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group" (Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 397). Setting themes describe where the action is taking place or where the characters are performing their actions. They may also describe the characteristics of the scene (Foss 123). Character themes describe the agents, actors or personas in the drama. They assign motives and characteristics to the actors. Usually, there are heroes and villains, and

characters in starring roles, along with others whom are playing supporting roles. Plotlines, or action themes, focus on the action in the drama. Sanctioning agents complete the scene. They serve as the sources that justify the acceptance and promulgation of the vision. Common sanctioning agents can be relatively abstract concepts such as God, democracy, and justice, or it can be a charismatic individual (Jackson 6). Fantasy themes involve characters, plotlines, and settings that are not immediately involved with the group situation in time and place (Foss 123). As Bormann explains:

Messages that contain rhetorical fantasies cast there-and-then events in narrative frames and provide a structured, understandable, and meaningful interpretation of what happened. The speaker will attribute motives, purposes, and causes to the people in the story and will fit the events into a meaningful sequence of events" ("Television Coverage" 134).

When fantasy themes chain-out through a society, they form a rhetorical vision (Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 398). Analyzing these chains and their consequent rhetorical visions offers a vantage

point into the dramas that shape societies. According to Bormann, "The explanatory power of the fantasy chain analysis lies in its ability to account for the development, evolution, and decay of dramas that catch up groups of people and change their behavior" ("Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 399).

Fantasies are further characterized by their artistic and organized quality. Bormann writes that they "provide a structured, understandable, and meaningful interpretation of what happened" ("Television Coverage" 134). This interpretation then provides the social reality that "makes sense out of the blooming buzzing confusion of the experience." As Foss writes, fantasy themes "are designed to create the most credible interpretation of experience or the most comprehensible forms for making sense out of experience" (124). Individuals are not the only ones who gain an understanding based on the fantasy and its interpretation. Anyone who shares the fantasy will come to see the world in similar ways. Some "symbolic common ground" is established and people are able to talk about the shared interpretation with code words or brief allusions inaccessible to those who do not share

the fantasy (Bormann, "Fantasy Theme Analysis and Rhetorical Theory" 454). This common ground is developed through the sharing of the fantasy. Fantasy types develop when people in the same community share similar scenarios involving the same scenes, characters, and settings. They are archetypal or stock rhetorical visions that appear regularly in the rhetoric of a group (Foss 124).

Like fantasy themes, fantasy types help communities cope with changes, new events, or experiences by allowing them to be placed into a familiar pattern. A new experience can be brought into alignment with a group's values and emotions if it is portrayed as an instance of a familiar fantasy type (Foss 125). The media's naming of presidential scandals demonstrates their invocation of the familiar Watergate fantasy theme and President Richard Nixon. The incident involving President Jimmy Carter's brother Billy was dubbed Billygate and President Bill Clinton weathered both the Whitewater scandal (sometimes referred to as Whitewatergate) and Monicagate.

Rhetorical visions are a "unified putting-together of the various scripts that gives the participants a

broader view of things" (Bormann, "Homo Narrans" 133)

They also serve as a unit of analysis in fantasy theme criticism. If they are compelling, if they speak convincingly to people's 'here-and-now' problems in a dramatic form, then the symbolic ground found through fantasy types becomes even more encompassing as the rhetorical vision emerges (Jackson 5). Rhetorical visions contain what Bormann calls a master analogy; a keyword, slogan, or label usually mark them. Rhetorical visions mark a rhetorical community's arrival at a "level of symbolic maturity such that its members can make a cryptic allusion not just to details of fantasy themes and types but to a total coherent view of an aspect of their social reality" (Bormann, "Homo Narrans" 133). A rhetorical vision forms a rhetorical community that, through its vision (which includes fantasy themes that account for setting, characters, and actions), creates a coherent interpretation of reality. The interpretation both simplifies and gives form to reality. Members of the rhetorical community "will cheer references to the heroic persona in their rhetorical vision. They will respond with antipathy to allusions to the villains. They will have agreed-upon

procedures for problem-solving communication. They will share the same vision of what counts as evidence, how to build a case, and how to refute an argument"

(Bormann, "Symbolic Convergence Theory" 131).

Some fantasy themes, known as modal society fantasies or archetypal fantasies, are so intrinsic to the rhetoric of the society that they go beyond association with a particular rhetorical community. They cross boundaries from one community to another. The American dream, for instance, is a modal society fantasy. It is a fantasy whose themes, types and vision are familiar and accessible to rhetorical communities throughout America. A rhetorical vision is a composite drama, in which large groups of people participate, and that is especially true with modal society fantasies.

Not all fantasies are successful. Some fall on deaf ears and do not chain out widely. To realize the kind of success that a fantasy like the American dream has achieved, a fantasy theme somehow has to explain and reconcile the community to changes it is facing:

The rhetoric must deal with anxiety aroused by times of trouble, by evil within the social reality. The rhetoric must deal with changing circumstances, social conflict,

success as well as failure. Communication is the means by which the community makes and implements plans and interprets their success and failures (Bormann, Force of Fantasy 16).

The media develop brief dramatization of complex events that allow people to develop the shared fantasies they need in order to create coherent accounts of experience in the past or the imagined future (Bormann, "Symbolic Convergence Theory" 134). These coherent accounts "simplify and form the social reality of the participants" (134). As Bormann explains:

No matter how apocalyptic or utopian, the audience's shared dreams provide comprehensible forms for thinking about and experiencing the future. Fantasy themes are always slanted, ordered, and interpreted; they provide a rhetorical means for large segments of the audience to account for and explain the same experiences or events in different ways (134).

Kip Kinkel's actions the morning of May 21, 1998 left a community facing dramatic anxiety and uncertainty. Fantasy theme analysis, with its focus on understanding how people interpret events to "assign responsibility, to praise or blame, to arouse and propitiate guilt, to hate, and to love" is well suited

to examining the media coverage of the shootings at Thurston High School (Bormann, "Fantasy Theme Analysis and Rhetorical Theory" 454). As I discussed earlier, a number of researchers, including Bormann, have used fantasy theme analysis in the rhetorical criticism of newspapers. Particularly, researchers have used it as a tool to explore national politics in the United States. Bormann's "Political Cartoons and Rhetorical Fantasies," was "based on an analogy that sees mass communication events creating shared fantasies in larger publics by means of the same dynamic psychological processes which create shared fantasies in small face-to-face groups (Bormann, Koester, and Bennett 319). Audience members are not alone in developing fantasies; the coverage journalists give an issue is colored by the fantasies they share and the resulting coverage is dramatized because of this common vision (Bormann, Koester, and Bennett 319). As the fantasies are transferred to the audience members, they continue to chain out:

The viewers who participated in mass media fantasies may retell the story in small group conversations with friends, family, co-workers, and others. If the members of

such groups participate in the dramatizations, they come to share the media fantasy second hand but within the supportive climate of the small group (319).

The audience "jointly experience the same emotions, develop common heroes and villains, celebrate certain actions as laudable, and interpret some aspect of their common experience in the same way" (Bormann, "Homo Narrans" 131). In many ways, the media by definition creates fantasy themes. As Sharf points out, the media's job is to take huge amounts of information and winnow it down to a reasonable amount: "Although they may be criticized for distorting, the mass media serve as a screen that selects and presents an unwieldy environment to us in ways we can manage and understand" (Sharf 83). This is particularly important, according to Sharf, "because what matters in terms of a shared rhetorical vision is the material to which the public is exposed" (83).

To complete a fantasy theme analysis, Bormann says that it is necessary to trace fantasy themes across rhetorical situations and discourses. A single text does not offer the critic the opportunity to establish a pattern and identify the themes. Foss identifies the

steps the rhetorical critic should take in conducting the fantasy theme analysis. Using her suggestions and those of Bormann, this study will first seek evidence that there has been symbolic convergence, or a sharing of fantasy themes, or a rhetorical vision established. It will involve determining if there are fantasy themes and types at work in the newspapers' coverage of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School. This will mean coding the newspapers, looking for the use of symbolic cues and identifying recurrent fantasy themes. This process will involve a careful, line by line, examination and reading of the texts. When the coding is complete, fantasy theme patterns will be identified and a rhetorical vision, if one is present, will be constructed.

ANALYSIS

*"I want nothing more than to put a bullet in his head.
The one reason I don't: Hope. That tomorrow will be
better. As soon as my hope is gone, people die."
- Kip Kinkel*

Bormann writes that his method rests on the rationale that a fantasy theme, type, or rhetorical vision is "important on the basis of its frequent appearance in messages or on the basis of its appearance in qualitatively significant instances" ("Fetching Good Out of Evil" 130). According to Bormann, a critic "searches the discourse under study first for the fantasy themes which are common and representative and then places similar themes together to discover the more general fantasy types" (130). For Bormann, reconstruction based on "the composite dramas which catch up a large group of people" allows the critic to discover the group's symbolic reality which Bormann terms a "rhetorical vision" (130). Other than hinting that frequency of a rhetorical vision is important, Bormann offers little direction to the would-be critic. Even Bormann admits that there is a certain vagueness to his methodology: "The method provides the critic with the drama in manifest form but

does not give a set of rules for the critic to use in evaluating and criticizing the fantasies" (130).

In an attempt to bring clarity to Bormann's vague directions, Foss offers a five-step-interpretation. She writes that the critic needs to seek evidence of shared fantasies. The critic must first "find evidence that symbolic convergence has taken place--that people have shared fantasy themes and a rhetorical vision" (Foss 127). The critic must also keep an eye out for cryptic allusions to symbolic common ground (127). Such allusions, she writes, may be indicated by "[f]requent mention of a theme, a narrative, or an analogy in a variety of messages in different contexts" (128). For Foss, the second step of the process is to code the artifact, picking out references to settings, characters, and actions that may be fantasy themes. Accomplishing this, she says, "involves a careful examination of the artifact, sentence by sentence in a verbal text. . . ." (128).

The procedure Foss describes is at best cryptic. Exact details of how to apply fantasy theme analysis are rare. When Bormann introduced fantasy theme analysis in 1972, he wrote that there was "not space to

describe the technique in detail" ("Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 246). Unfortunately, for those who use his method, Bormann never seems to have found space to describe his technique in detail. Throughout his body of work on fantasy theme analysis, Bormann rarely does more than hint at the practical aspects of using fantasy theme analysis. His 1982 discussion of the hostage release and the Reagan inaugural address, his analysis of The Eagleton Affair, and even his book, The Force of Fantasy, offer no real information on how his analysis was conducted. In his book, Bormann writes only that "[o]nce the rhetorical critics document the presence of rhetorical visions, communities, and consciousness, they can make a humanistic evaluation of the quality of the rhetoric and the social realities of the people who share the consciousness" (3-4). He does not, however, suggest how the critic should document the presence of those visions, communities, or consciousness.

A number of other researchers also fail to provide detailed accounts of their identification of fantasy themes, types, and rhetorical visions. Cragan and Shields, for instance, fail to offer information on the

procedure they used to perform their criticism of campaign rhetoric ("Peoria" 76). The two turn to a Q-sort methodology developed around their identification of rhetorical visions. However, they do not reveal how they determine the existence of those visions. In their 1981 study of television, Schrag, Hudson, and Bernabo write that the vision they are studying can "best be understood by examining each of its dominant fantasy themes" (6). They fail, however, to provide any details concerning how the fantasy themes they write about were identified.

Bormann, Kroll, Watters, and McFarland provide slightly more information on the process. They first conduct their analysis of campaign messages with Bormann's prescribed examination "to discover shared fantasy themes, types, and rhetorical visions" (288). They then use their rhetorical analysis as the basis for a Q-sort study designed to reveal the shared fantasies and rhetorical visions among small samples of voters (288). Bormann et al. examine their artifacts looking for "evidence that symbolic convergence had taken place" by looking for "similar dramatizing material such as word play, narratives, figures of

speech and analogies" that "cropped up in a variety of messages in different contexts" (289). Based on their identification of symbolic convergence, they construct the rhetorical vision of the Carter, Reagan, and Anderson campaign organizations and the vision of the media based on the "collected evidence of fantasy sharing, including the repetition of themes, inside cue-allusions to themes, fantasy types, and humorous comments" (291).

Sharf relies on a search through a variety of computerized databases to find the broadest range of popular magazine and newspaper articles published from 1981 to 1984 that dealt with both John F. Hinckley's attempted assassination of President Reagan and psychologists (82). Sharf focuses on publications with a national circulation to find the "depictions of specific persons and events related to the Hinckley proceedings by popular press commentators" that serve as the source of the fantasy themes she identifies (82). Sharf notes that the themes she discovers are designed to catch the attention and involvement of the readers: "these descriptions are dramatic, colorful, opinionated, and often figurative in quality" (82).

Having identified fantasy themes and types, Sharf writes that she found a number of fantasy types that formed interrelationships, resulting in the rhetorical vision. This vision, she says, "forms the basis of a public rhetorical vision, a generalized attitude and image, regarding psychiatrists" (82). According to Sharf, these attitudes and images--greed, self-centeredness, pretense to knowledge, incompetency on the job, poor communication, foolishness--are used to characterize psychiatrists "as alien to our own idealized self-images and. . .therefore aid in setting 'them' apart from 'us'" (83).

Fortunately, not every one is as vague about the method used to find fantasy themes, types and visions. Putnam et al. examine teachers' bargaining field notes and interview transcripts to establish a context for the negotiating process and then look for dramatic messages, examples, or illustrations that "revealed digressions from the here-and-now deliberations of the interactions" (93). They then sort the digressions into non-fantasy themes (analogies, examples, or stories that did not chain out in or between the groups) and fantasy themes (those that did chain out). The

researchers examine the plot lines, characters, and scenes of the fantasy themes and types that emerged based on their origin and which are then "plotted onto large computer sheets" (93). They find symbolic convergence by examining emotions, motives, and values "represented in the constellation of fantasy themes and types" which allows them to note both the similarities and differences in the symbolic convergence of the two districts they were studying.

In their study of the Carter persona, Rarick et al. also offer a more concrete look at their method of rhetorical criticism. Following Bormann's procedure, the researchers gather campaign materials generated by both the media and the Carter and Ford campaigns from September 1 to October 25, 1976. Three of the researchers then independently analyzed the material. The researchers discovered several "dramatic incidents in which the persona of Jimmy Carter played a major role" (262-263). Following Bormann's lead, they looked particularly at the "characterizations of Carter in the incidents, his reported values and motivation, his actions and the settings in which the incidents occurred" (263). They identify 20 "major dramatic

incidents (or themes)" from the Carter campaign, 12 from the Ford campaign, and 14 from the media. The researchers use a criteria for selecting thematic areas including frequency of appearance in the campaign and news materials, range of media in which the themes appeared, and dramatic content of the themes (263). Using these criteria, they chose eight thematic areas "richest in fantasizing about Carter," and "returned to the original rhetoric in the campaign and news media materials and wrote three separate fantasies of Carter for each" based on the way the two campaigns and the media dramatized the Carter persona (263). The researchers then use a Q-methodology in an attempt to discover how members of the electorate viewed the dramatizations.

While in many studies detailed descriptions of the method are lacking, critics who use fantasy theme analysis all reinforce the idea that it is based first on describing the salient elements of rhetoric that cohere along the lines of setting, character, and plot lines. Before advancing with an analysis, one must understand the terms "setting," "character," and "plot lines." Settings are places where action occurs or the

place where characters act out their roles. A character is someone who performs action in the setting.

Plotlines, or action themes, are characterizations of what action was taken, how it was done, and why the action was taken.

Although Rarick et al. combine their fantasy theme analysis with a Q-sort, their use of fantasy theme analysis is applicable to my own analysis. Each of the news articles I use for my analysis has received multiple readings for descriptions of character, setting and plotlines.¹

¹My own categories of plotline, setting and characters find their foundation in Bales' original work. Bales writes that as groups fantasize, they develop culture, which leads to the development of new realms of reality: ". . . a world of heroes, villains, saints, and enemies--a drama, a work of art. The culture of a group is a fantasy established from the past, which is acted upon in the present. In such moments. . . one is 'transported' to a world which somehow seems even more real than the everyday world. One may feel exalted, fascinated, perhaps horrified or threatened, or powerfully impelled to action, but in any case, involved." (152).

Bales establishes categories for the researchers to place group participants in. Interactions between group members can seem friendly, dramatize, agree, give suggestion, give opinion, give information, ask for information, ask for opinion, ask for suggestions, disagree, show tensions, or seem unfriendly. Any time the group dramatizes something fantasy is at work. Bales says: "The analysis of dramatic images, personages, and their acts, presented in conversation gives a way of approaching underlying emotional problems of the individual and the group" (106).

I have grouped these descriptions together so that I can make general descriptive claims about them. Following the lead of Rarick et al., my criteria for selecting thematic areas was based on both their frequency of appearance and their dramatic content.

Dramatic content is the type of coverage that emerges when journalists shift away from simply relating the facts of who, what, when, where, why, and how and begin to flesh out their stories with adjectives. Dramatic content does not just relate that Kip Kinkel shot his parents. Dramatic content paints a picture for the reader of Kip Kinkel ("blonde," "skinny," "freckled," "troubled"). In seeking characters, plotlines, and settings simply appearing in print is not enough to justify significance. Instances of dramatic content are, however, significant. In newspapers, moments of drama occur when reporters cross over from being simple purveyors of the facts to storytellers. When reporters abandon simply relating the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a story to describing the story, it becomes a moment of dramatic interest that critics should note.

The fantasy theme critic needs to be particularly sensitive to such moments. Relying on a formulaic understanding of fantasy theme analysis would allow the critic to overlook significant fantasy types and themes. In laying out his design for fantasy theme analysis Bormann suggests that the quantitative frequency with which a particular fantasy theme or type emerges is significant. While Bormann's suggestion that critics watch for numerical frequency is valid, ordinal weight cannot be the only element the critic considers. When a reporter chooses to spend both the time and the column space to relate details, focus on vignettes or somehow deviate from simply relating the "hard" news elements of a story, the critic should pay attention. Journalists write under several constraints. The first constraint is time. A daily newspaper is coming out every day whether it is convenient for the journalist or not. Stories must be written. The second constraint is space. Newspaper size is determined by advertising content and journalists do not have access to unlimited space. The third constraint I want to mention is copy editors. No journalist writes alone. Editors both have, and exercise, the power to eliminate copy, rewrite

copy, and generally alter the shape of the article turned in by the reporter. If dramatic moments are in a news story it means, that despite all of the constraints facing the reporter, he or she has taken the time to include them and been given the space and latitude to include the detail. It isn't just ordinal occurrences that suggest an element of a fantasy, it is also this focus on the greater drama of the story. The critic then should look for instances where journalists shift from simply relaying facts to offering more dramatic content. It is important to note that dramatic moments may include characters, settings, and plotlines that are unique to one particular source (in this case, one particular news story). In seeking instances of dramatic content, the actual amount of time a reporter spends on the fantasy theme is another important element. This may include recognizing when a reporter is devoting a notable amount of space to an element. In the world of newspapers five column inches is a significant amount of space to devote to any element of a story and even five sentences (which will often be four or five paragraphs) probably suggests that the reporter felt the material was important. As Bormann

himself notes, "Developing audience interest in a drama which emphasizes character takes time and time is in short supply" in the media ("Eagleton" 261). The fantasy theme critic's job then is not just to count the number of times a given fantasy type emerges. The critic must also seek instances of dramatic content.

THE SETTINGS

After multiple readings of the news articles, several settings emerge. The Kinkel home where Kip grew up and where he killed his parents figures prominently in the coverage. The Oregonian describes the Kinkels' home three times, while it appears seven times in The Register-Guard, and four times in The New York Times. For instance, one Oregonian reporter writes, "Kip Kinkel's family home, nestled among the fir trees just north of this city was sealed off" (Barnard A11). Another Oregonian article also focuses on the home's rural setting: "Five miles east of the school, up the emerald McKenzie River Valley, two adults were found shot to death at the home of the suspect. . ." (Baker A23). The pastoral setting is further emphasized when The Register-Guard points out the name of the Kinkels'

neighborhood: "The first act of this horror story had played out earlier in the family home. It's in wooded highlands above the McKenzie Valley, off Deerhorn Road in . . . a subdivision named, ironically, Shangri-La" (Bishoff C5). The New York Times also mentions the pastoral setting of the Kinkel home, describing its location as "in the green hills east of Springfield" (Egan 1A). The New York Times also notes the name of the Kinkels' "wooded neighborhood...at the foothills of the Cascades by the McKenzie River...where houses sit on two to five acres" (Goodstein 20A).

In later coverage of the event, the veil of secrecy is lifted from the Kinkel's home as it becomes the setting for describing both Kip Kinkel's obsession with violence and the murder of his parents. The Register-Guard emphasizes the pastoral setting of the home while also describing the bizarre setting Bill and Faith Kinkel's bodies were discovered in:

[O]fficers drove to the family's secluded home in a heavily wooded rural subdivision. . . They found a sliding glass door unlocked and heard the strains of "Romeo and Juliet" playing continuously on the CD player. Inside, they found Bill Kinkel's body in a locked bathroom on the main floor. He was

covered with a sheet and had a single bullet wound behind and above his right ear. .
.(Neville, "Scene" 9A).

Another Register-Guard article notes that a human image "childishly rendered in orange spray paint" on a sheet of plywood sat "propped against a tree, clearly visible from the Kinkels' deck" (McCowan, "Target" D1). The wood, the columnist writes, "bears hundreds of chips and gouges where something--a knife? Bbs?--repeatedly peppered the figure's kill zone, the part of the torso containing vital organs" (D1). The reporter also notes that investigators found a quilt in Kip Kinkel's bedroom that he had apparently made that featured squares with designs that included the words "Hate," and "Pyro Technics" and images such as a yellow smiley face, "a bloody bullet-hole marring its forehead" (D1). Police also found "The Anarchist Cookbook" in Kinkel's room along with a collections of knives kept in two drawers under his bed and a collection of guns and explosives kept in the loft above Kinkel's room (D1).

The same columnist notes the seeming normalcy of the Kinkel home from crime scene photos presented at the sentencing hearing:

In crime scene photos, however, it was familiar details in the Kinkel home--not their unimaginable deaths--that made you mourn the loss of these much-loved teachers. A jar on the breakfast bar holds cooking utensils you might find in your own kitchen. You imagine a brown paper bag on a table contains groceries Faith intended to cook that night" (D1).

SPRINGFIELD

In contrast to the pastoral setting given to the Kinkel house, The Oregonian seems to depict the rest of Springfield as a working class town. Springfield emerged as one of the most frequent settings throughout the coverage. Springfield was the setting in four New York Times articles, seven Register-Guard articles, and twelve Oregonian articles. The Oregonian describes the home of one of Kinkel's victims as "a one-story gray house in a modest, toy-littered Springfield neighborhood" (Filips A14). Noting that Springfield was also the home of Diane Downs, the mother who shot her three children 15 years ago and put the former mill town on the map, The Oregonian depicts Springfield as a place dangerous for children:

The city of 50,140 has seen children abused, tortured and murdered--10 in the past five

years. Last year, after 3-year-old Tesslynn O'Cull of Springfield was found in a shallow grave--her body allegedly battered and burned by her mother and her mother's boyfriend--the community promised to make child abuse its No. 1 priority (Baker A23).

In Oregonian coverage, not only does the town have a problem with child abuse, it is "home to the school of hard knocks." While Eugene, separated from Springfield physically only by the Willamette River, is "home to the University of Oregon" (Baker A23). Some reports focus on the redneck quality of the town. One Register Guard reporter quotes a local business manager: "I hate to say it, but we are a small, redneck community. . . . And we're heartsick that this could happen" (Harwood, "Painful news" 3A). The redneck image is further developed in The Oregonian which notes the town's southern heritage:

Many longtime residents trace their roots to Arkansas, where the Rosboro Lumber Co. mill got started. Before World War II, the company loaded up the mill on a train and headed toward Springfield, lured by 100-foot Douglas fir trees as far as the eye can see (Baker A23).

Although noting that an increasing number of residents are finding work in the fields of high

technology and retail, The Oregonian argues that Springfield "still feels the loss of thousands of timber jobs and has a hard time shaking its 'redneck' past" (Baker A23). The Oregonian finds a local woman to illustrate the problems it says Springfield faces:

"Springfield is the poor society," says Jamie Tallman, 21, who lives in the Applewood Mobile Home Park two miles from Thurston High School with her husband and two children. "We're poorer than Eugene, and it's like we're looked down on" (A23).

Another girl, a 15-year-old Springfield High School student, tells The Oregonian she isn't surprised the shooting happened in Springfield: "If anything, I thought we'd have this kind of thing here. We're supposed to be the white-trash school" (Duin A20).

The Oregonian's coverage emphasizes the pastoral setting of both the town and the school by focusing on trees: "By 10 a.m., with satellite trucks in place, the horrific pictures began trickling in. It could have been Arkansas or Kentucky--but those were Douglas firs in the background this time" (Schulberg B01).

The New York Times also situates Springfield in a pastoral setting: "One of Oregon's fastest-growing

neighborhoods, Thurston has a landscape of bicycle paths, flowering shrubs and neatly kept homes that quickly gives way to cow and horse pastures and the foothills of the Cascades" (Brooke 9A).

While noting that Thurston is a "10-minute drive from the university city of Eugene" and "shares Oregon's tolerant 'western New England' politics and its high-technology 'Silicon Forest' economy," The New York Times also labels Springfield "solidly middle-class" and notes that the town "45 minutes from the hunting and camping of Willamette National Forest. . .embodies Oregon's cultural mix, where half the households have guns and half have home computers (Brooke 9A). The reporter notes that it isn't the guns that bother local residents:

In a setting where many people grow up with guns, it is the use of them by children to shoot classmates that has alarmed people. "Kids used to go into the school parking lot with rifles on racks in their trucks," said Greg Deedon, a 30-year-old Springfield Fire Department paramedic who attended high school here in the mid-1980's. "But it never crossed our minds to use our rifles against someone else" (9A).

Another New York Times article also focuses on the rural aspect of Springfield: "Springfield is known as a timber town, with a rural feel, though in recent years it has been on an economic upswing with the arrival of computer-chip factories" (Egan 1A). This article also focuses on the prevalence of guns: "Residents here said many students are familiar with guns, because they hunt" (1A).

FINDING SPRINGFIELD

There a number of other settings that, while quantitatively insignificant, serve as important settings. These businesses and locations add to the atmosphere the reporters create to describe Springfield. While many, such as Fins Drive-In appear only once in all of the coverage, the reporters spend a great deal of time developing these locations as settings. The Oregonian turns to Fins Drive-In explaining that business is slow, half of what it's supposed to be, by 3 Thursday afternoon:

Jerry Hooton reads the numbers on the register receipt. And he notes the weather. It's habit. Whoever cashes out checks the weather. Sixty degrees and cloudy. Waitress

Melissa West scribbles another - 'HECKTIC!!
Thurston H.S. Shot Up. It will be
remembered!'

By 10 p.m., Hooton, the owner of the
'50s-era burger joint, climbs a ladder. He
remembers his senior year at Springfield
High School in '82. That's when a sophomore
shot himself in the boy's bathroom. It stuck
with Hooton. The kid was kind of quiet. Both
worked in the cafeteria but never spoke.
What could he have done 16 years ago? He
changes the letters on his reader board:

"Thurston our hearts are with you"
(Pancrazio A13).

The local Safeway also becomes a setting in The
Oregonian:

There are balloons, too, knotted and
tied to each of the six registers. White,
red and black. Some of them are marked with
names. Ben Walker. Jennifer Alldredge. Faith
Kinkel. And 21 other names.

Connie Hoff, the store manager, says
the balloons kind of appeared.

'I let people do what they feel like
they need to do.' Her children are grown.
The baggers and checkers are her kids now.
Like a family, she needs them, especially
today.

Faith Kinkel and Connie Hoff were
neighbors. They were walking partners (A13).

According to The Oregonian, both Ryker brothers
were heroes at the Time-Out Tavern, a former loggers'
bar, turned into a community tavern with dart teams,
pool teams, a trophy case, family picnics, and holiday

parties, where the patrons gathered for hand-holding and hugging after the shootings.

It used to be, years ago, that you walked in the Time-Out Tavern a boy but stumbled out a man. That's when Main Street was a dirt road, flanked by cornfields, and the bar was lined with loggers. . .

This week it's been a place with a lot of hand-holding and hugging. A place where you can tell your friend how much you hurt.

It's a place where you can yell down the bar that's the length of a bowling lane, "Give me a 'short' and drop money into one of the huge iced-tea jars. For Jake and Josh Ryker. This community inside the tavern wants to send them to Disneyland."
(Pancrazio A13).

THE SCHOOL

The most prominent setting at Thurston High School is the fence, which evolved into an impromptu memorial to the victims of the shooting. The fence is the setting eleven times in Oregonian coverage, twice in The New York Times, and eleven in The Register-Guard. One Oregonian reporter writes, "Television satellite trucks rumbled into town and news helicopters hovered over the high school as groups of tearful students tucked flowers into the chainlink fence around the school. One young man pounded a quickly-made pinewood

cross into the ground near the main entrance to Thurston" (The Oregonian, "It's Happened Here"). Another Oregonian article describes the fence as a "makeshift memorial," noting that after dark about 30 students gathered at the fence where they "[t]hey lit candles; they embraced. Others stopped to leave ribbons, balloons, and signs saying, 'Stop the Killing' and 'God Bless Thurston High School'" (Bernstein and Thompson 20A). For The Oregonian, the fence becomes a place of mourning that stretches beyond the local community of Springfield and beyond school shootings in general. Noting that a sheaf of e-mail messages "from locations as far flung as North Carolina and Canada" were left at the fence, the article continues, "One read, I spent two years in Vietnam and I know the feelings of loss you now have" (Bernstein and Thompson 20A). Another Oregonian article focuses on the flowers, messages and religious symbols left at the fence:

Under mottled skies, they've left bouquets of daisies, freesia, honeysuckle, call lilies. They've burned candles, written poems and planted crosses with pictures of Jesus.. 'Prayer is not the least, but the most, we can do for another human being,' read one message (Lednicer, "Flowers, messages and prayers" A01).

The Register-Guard describes the fence as a place where people who are part of "the broken heart club" join together to mourn: "Walk down the fence line. Wear the grass into a brown mat. Kneel to read the messages. Stop and gulp and feel that clench in your chest that says you're a member" (Mortenson, "Mending fence" 1A).

Other coverage focuses on the flowers adorning the fence: "Thousands of flowers filled the chain-link barrier outside the school, some sections thick enough with roses and carnations to form a floral wall. It was a tribute to the survivors and an expression of sorrow for the dead" (Harwood, "Floral Tributes" 9A). One Register-Guard article uses the fence to establish a contrast between the world created by people and the world created by nature:

See that, in places, the flowers cover the cyclone fence like a vertical carpet. Like the roses, peonies, snap dragons, baby's breath, carnations and rhododendron branches are growing from the wire and taking it over. Like blooms springing out of sorrow (Mortenson, "Mending fence" 7A).

The fence is not only a symbol of healing. It also functions as a symbol of society's inability to stop Kip Kinkel from carrying out his attack:

Hundreds of people stung by the tragic shooting at Thurston High School paid their respects Friday to the dead and the injured, weaving flowers and sympathy cards into the fence that 24 hours before could not keep Kipland Phillip Kinkel and his guns off the property" (Harwood, "Floral tributes" 9A).

The New York Times has a similar view of the fence's function:

First a chain-link fence was erected outside the suburban high school here to keep out deer. Then gates were added to keep out drug dealers. Today the fence bore flowers, poems and prayers in memory of teen-agers shot by a fellow student (Brooke 9A).

THE CAFETERIA

The cafeteria is notable as a setting not for how often it is described, but rather for the lack of description it receives. It emerges as a setting nine times in The Register-Guard, nine times in The Oregonian, and three times in The New York Times. The cafeteria, the place where Kip Kinkel did the bulk of his shooting and the hallway just off of the cafeteria

where he killed Ben Walker serve only as location where actions are carried out. Coverage from The Oregonian demonstrates the role of the cafeteria as simply a backdrop for the shooting. One columnist, for instance, writes: "Why? Why did Kipland Kinkel climb atop a table in the Thurston High School cafeteria and mow down his classmates?" (Reinhard D14). Another reporter also focuses on the shooting rather than the setting of the crime: "'I had blood all over me', said Stacy, who ducked under a cafeteria table when the bullets started flying" (Bernstein and Thompson A20). Another Oregonian article laments that a school shooting has happened in Oregon: "A boy with a rifle walked into the crowded cafeteria of a good high school in a nice Oregon town on Thursday morning, and opened fire on what's left of our innocence" ("It's happened here" D14).

Another Oregonian article does give more focus to the cafeteria as a setting: "Kyle Howes was standing in line at the snack bar trying to decide whether to eat candy or a bagel for breakfast when he heard shots and saw a kid with a gun 'firing like crazy'" (Green A11).

Even after the school district opens the cafeteria back up to the students, The Oregonian does little to

describe the cafeteria: "They patched the bullet holes in the cafeteria, painted a hallway and splashed fresh bark dust around newly planted flowers at Thurston High School during the holiday weekend" (Taylor and Trujillo A01). Other than noting the repairs and that the black trim in the cafeteria had been repainted, the cafeteria is not physically described in article. The cafeteria remains only a place where action occurred: "I'm scared out of my mind. I don't want to go in the cafeteria," said the 18-year-old senior, who watched her best friend, Teresa Miltonberger, collapse in a pool of blood after Thursday's shooting" (Taylor "Prayers, tears" A01).

The Register-Guard also treats the cafeteria as a place where action occurred, rather than a location to be described. Like The Oregonian, The Register-Guard notes the work the school district did to repair the room: "The floors are mopped, bullet holes filled and broken tables replaced. The school staff has made the cafeteria look exactly as it did the minute before Kip Kinkel stepped through the door" (Dietz, "Returning to Thurston" A1).

The cafeteria does take on more of a descriptive quality in one Register-Guard article. The reporter writes that the cafeteria has been cleaned up and repainted:

They patched the bullet holes and repainted where they had to. Cleaned up the spots where innocence slumped to the floor. It looks so normal, that's the thing. They still have student body election posters up on the wall. Vote for Donny and Stef, ASB Prez and Vice Prez. Do you want to have fun? Vote for Tiffany Burnett. . .

So it all looks so normal. Like the cafeteria you sat in, with institutional linoleum and rows of tables under banks of fluorescent tubes. You and your friends at the same table every day. Just substitute the Colts' colors for our own and you're there, red cinder block walls and black beams (Mortenson, "Where innocence slumped" 1A).

THE CHURCHES

Churches act as settings twice in The Register-Guard, and just once in The Oregonian. Churches do not act as setting in The New York Times. In The Oregonian, churches serve as sites of anguish and information dissemination as parents try to find out whether or not their children are among the wounded: "'Can we see the list?' an agitated parent asked a counselor at United

Methodist St. Paul Center, across the street from the school's main entrance" (Bernstein and Thompson A20).

The Register-Guard offers descriptions of some churches during their Sunday services. Thurston Christian Church decided that regular services wouldn't meet the needs of its parishioners. Instead, the pastor choose to change the service to reflect the tragedy: So parishioners and guests arrived to find 30 candles resting on two rails in the front of the sanctuary, a red-and-black ribbon--Thurston's school colors--attached to each white taper.

Each pew had a box of Kleenex at hand - 30 boxes in all. As the sanctuary lights were dimmed and the candles were lighted one by one, it didn't take long for the first sniffles to punctuate the air.

It was not a typical service Sunday morning at Thurston Christian Church--or at dozens of other local churches--as community members gathered to share their tears, their hugs and their faith in the face of the inexplicable (Wright, "Congregations" 1A).

THE FUNERALS

The funerals serve primarily as settings used to describe the two victims, Ben Walker and Mikael Nickolauson. Funerals emerge as settings in both The Oregonian (once) and The Register-Guard (twice). They are not settings in The New York Times. Although without ordinal significance, the funerals do warrant a

significant amount of descriptive space in the two papers.

Walker's funeral was attended by 400 mourners in Springfield Faith Center and watched by a national television audience, according to The Oregonian (Lednicer and Walth A01). The Oregonian's description of the funeral focuses on the role of mourners:

The service. . .began with Springfield fire and police officials, Lane County sheriff's employees and local paramedics laying wreaths on the altar. Mourners arrived under clear skies wearing ribbons: red and black, Thurston High's school colors, and blue, to honor the victims. One white Oldsmobile arrived with the words "Let it end Here" painted in red across its back window.

Inside the church, members of Springfield's Fire and Life Safety Department stood against the right wall, badges wrapped with black bands. Ben's family and friends filled six rows.

About 20 people watched the funeral on a big-screen television outdoors, as CNN broadcast it nationally. Across the parking lot, police kept a picket of TV cameras and other media behind blue tape (A01).

The Oregonian notes the music played at the service ("My Heart Will Go On," "Amazing Grace" on bagpipes and Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters" a tribute to Walker from his brother, Adam). As the

service ended, the reporters write that "family members filed past Ben's open, caramel-colored casket. He wore a denim shirt and a black baseball cap" (A01).

According to the reporters, as mourners left, they were given yellow, pink and red carnations - a 'thank you' from the Walker family that they were asked to add to the fence outside Thurston. While the service started under clear skies, "A cold rain fell as the service ended. A lone mourner who had watched the service on television pedaled her bicycle from the church" (A01).

The Register-Guard describes Walker's girlfriend: "About 500 people attended the funeral, including Walker's girlfriend, Shianne Shier, who wore Ben's heavy plaid shirt over her funeral dress" (Hartman and Foster 1A). The Register-Guard also notes the role of public safety workers in the service, the song chosen by his brother, and the carnations given to the people attending the funeral to place at the fence: "Cars were backed up for blocks getting to the site, where mourners walked through mud and pounding rain to attach their flowers and other mementos" (4A).

While it rained for Walker's funeral, the skies were clear the following day for Nickolauson's,

according to The Register-Guard: "Days of gloomy, rain-filled skies suddenly gave way to bright sun and fluffy white clouds as mourners spilled out of the Eugene Christian Fellowship sanctuary" (Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness" 1A). The paper reports that 700 people attended the boy's funeral where mourners ranged from "Thurston girls in bright red team jackets to leather-clad military veterans on motorcycles to spit-and-polish National Guard officers and enlistees" (1A).

THE COURTROOM

Like the cafeteria, the courtroom is not a setting that warrants much description on the part of the reporters. It appears seven times in The Register-Guard, three times in The Oregonian, and once in The New York Times. For the three newspapers, the courtroom is largely a setting where emotions and experts are given expression. The Oregonian, for instance, uses the courtroom simply to describe Kinkel's behavior: "Kipland P. Kinkel kept his head buried in his arms at the defense table Tuesday as a detective read from Kinkel's personal journal in a Lane County courtroom" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01). The article

continues to detail Kinkel's behavior in the courtroom, especially his behavior when he heard his own voice on tape describing how he killed his parents:

Throughout Tuesday's hearing, Kinkel bowed his head, either laying it in his arms on the table in front of him or hanging it below the table as he placed his elbows on his legs. After Kinkel heard his own voice recounting the killings on tape, Mullen brought him a tissue box. Kinkel, his head still down, grabbed a tissue and wiped his eyes beneath the table (A01).

Another article recounts how the statements of victims seemed to change Kinkel's behavior:

One by one, the victims of Kip Kinkel rose in court Tuesday and told him they thought the voices in his head were a lie, but the horrors he had created for each of them were real.

Unlike earlier in the hearing, when he hid his face or lay his head on the table when people described his crimes, Kinkel sat up, apparently keeping a resolve recounted by his sister, Kristin, to listen to the victims. When people asked - or like Ryker demanded - that he look at them, he complied (Barnard, "Kip Kinkel gets 112 years" A01).

Another Oregonian story focuses on the behavior of the mothers of Kinkel's victims:

Nickolauson's mother, Dawn, sat in the second row of the courtroom with a notepad,

which she put aside as students recounted the death of her son. Linda Ryker, whose son Jake was injured in the shooting, put her arm around Nickolauson during the testimony (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01).

One Register-Guard columnist describes the atmosphere of the courtroom as heavy: "It was a heavy day. Literally. I've never been in a room that held so much anger and sorrow" (McCowan, "Pain" 1D).

THE CHARACTERS

Bormann writes that the dramatizations contained in the mass media not only sustain people's sense of community, or impel them to action, but also "provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes" ("Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 244). In my multiple readings, I found the characters Bormann promised.

THE VILLAIN

Kip Kinkel is cast in the role of villain. He emerges as a character seven times in New York Times coverage, thirty-one times in The Oregonian, and thirty-four times in The Register-Guard.

The New York Times emphasizes Kinkel's abuse of animals, quoting a freshman boy who played football with Kinkel at Thurston: "He was always talking about what he did to animals. He would like to torture animals and stuff, and tell us about it" (Goodstein 20A). In the coverage of Kinkel's sentencing, all three papers use both witness testimony, expert testimony, and Kinkel's own words to present him as a disturbed individual. The Oregonian says that Kinkel's journals disclose "his intense alienation, anger, spurned love, fascination with guns and desperate pleas for help" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01). Authorities testify that they "heard the strains of 'Romeo and Juliet' playing from a living room CD player" when they arrived at the Kinkels' home on May 21 (A01). In Kip Kinkel's bedroom, the police found a punching bag "with writings that read, 'Nothing can stop me, Know,' (sic) and 'Mr. Self Destruction'" (A01).

Kinkel's villainy is developed, in part, through the New York Times' use of eyewitness testimony. Victims who survived the cafeteria shooting remember initially being confused: "He kicked the door, and he was in this trench coat and I thought it as part of the

play that we were supposed to have today. Then people started falling and screaming and bleeding. People were pushing to get out" (Egan 1A). Another witness, Michelle Calhoun, murdered student Mikael Nickolauson's fiancée, recalled Kinkel's demeanor: "He walked in, didn't look like he was bothered by anything, and just started shooting at random. . .It didn't look like he was bothered by anything. Like the shooting was just something he was doing" (Egan 1A). Other students support both the first witness' and Calhoun's observations:

He walked in and he was wearing this big, long trench coat and he pulled out a rifle," said James Kistner, another student. "He squeezed off, I say, about three or four rounds. Then there was a short pause. And from there on he just kept his finger on the trigger and let ammo fly (Egan 1A).

The Oregonian uses similar testimony to place Kinkel in the role of villain. Based on the description of Kinkel offered by one of his victims, a 16-year-old girl, leads the paper to conclude that she "saw a boy who acted more like a man:

He seemed experienced in what he was doing. The way he walked in, he seemed like an

adult. He looked bigger than just a smaller guy. I thought maybe it was some criminal, somebody who was angry. I thought it was an adult at first" (Green A11).

Another Oregonian article describes Kinkel with "blank eyes when he strode into Thurston High School's cafeteria Thursday morning and started shooting" (O'Neill A13).

In addition to eyewitness testimony, The Oregonian also uses expert testimony to provide an account of the characteristics that a killer like Kinkel would possess. One expert notes that a killer's mind is uncompromising and argues: "It sees the world as a one-way street. The world is his chessboard, and everyone else is a pawn. From the time he is little, he will do anything to get his way" (O'Neill A13). Another expert paints both Kinkel and other armed teens as a serious threat, arguing that "the most dangerous person in the world is a 15-year-old with a gun" (O'Neill A13).

Kinkel's sentencing hearing also provides The Oregonian with testimony to shape their portrayal of Kinkel. An eyewitness testifies in Kinkel's sentencing hearing about the manner in which he killed

Nicholauson: "I saw Mikael get on the floor. I saw Mr. Kinkel walk up to Mikael, kind of push him down, put the gun to his head and shoot" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01). Another witness testifies about the murder of Ben Walker: "He got side by side with Ben Walker, and Kip pulled. . .but the gun didn't fire. Then he cocked it, and he shot him in the head" (A01). The hero who helped stop Kinkel cannot escape from his anger at the villainy of the act. Jake Ryker bursts out in anger at the hearing: "I don't care if you're sick, you're insane or crazy. I can't stand here and look at you without wanting to kill you" ("Kip Kinkel's sentence" C10). In The Register-Guard, Ryker's girlfriend, victim Jennifer Alldredge, has a similar response to Kinkel's mental illness defense and his courtroom behavior: "I want you to know that I am not falling for his poor little mentally sick rich boy. I don't buy the whole act of burying your head in the table" ("Victims paint a picture of pain" 11A). After the judge sentenced Kinkel, Alldredge continued to deny Kinkel's illness: "I really wanted to know why this happened, why the defense tried to come up with these lame excuses of 'He's a schizophrenic'" (Neville, "Healing" 5A).

Another Register-Guard article quotes a victim's mother who hopes Kinkel will feel mental and emotional torment:

It's not going to be long, when you get into prison, that you're going to become someone's little friend--and everyone knows that. . .Death wouldn't have been the answer for you, or for us. To get any kind of justice for you to be tortured and troubled as we are is, to me, the final justice" (Neville, "Mother" 17A).

The Oregonian also presents Kinkel as the villain by focusing on the signs he was troubled. For instance, the paper notes that his AOL service account listed his hobbies as "Role-playing games, heavy metal music, violent cartoons/TV, sugared cereal, throwing rocks at cars and EC Comics" and his occupation as "Student, surfing the Web for info on how to build bombs" (Green and Filips A01). The Oregonian also notes that Kinkel had given a "well-organized, authoritative talk on how to make a bomb," illustrated with "a detailed picture he had drawn of an explosive connected to a clock" (A01). Several students tell The Oregonian that Kinkel talked about guns and bombs often. One even claims to have heard Kinkel and a friend plan the shooting spree

earlier in the year on the school bus. Others offer testimony that Kinkel listened to the music of Marilyn Manson and often went shooting at birds and ground animals: "Just out of the blue he'd say, 'I want to kill something.' I think he likes the feelings of killing something. He's really obsessed with guns, bombs, anarchy stuff" (A01). The Oregonian does quote one parent who found Kinkel's behavior disturbing. After Kinkel came to her son's 15th birthday party, gave him a tool to break into cars for a present, and sprayed the word "kill" on the driveway in whipped cream, Betty Anderson took action. She banned Kinkel from their house: "He was the one kid I told Jeff could never come back to my house again" (Green and Filips A01).

The Oregonian also describes Kinkel as mentally disturbed, writing that "the pain and horror of Kip Kinkel's descent into madness has been spilling out of a Lane County Courtroom this week. . ." (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01).

While much of the coverage casts Kinkel as the villain, a conflicted picture of Kip Kinkel does emerge. While being portrayed as an angry, violent

person, he is also portrayed as someone who was unlikely to commit the kind of crime for which he stands accused. In The Register-Guard one student, Melissa Hauk, describes Kinkel as the funny kid who sat next to her in freshman English: "He's a wild guy, but not that threatening. He's gotten into fights, but he's not horrible. He'll do stuff jokingwise in class. He's not the type to do this" (Bishoff 1C). The New York Times quotes Kinkel's attorney, Mark Sabitt, who admits that Kinkel has problems but denies that the judge's decision to sentence Kinkel to life in prison is just, "He's a sick kid but he's not a throwaway. He deserves some hope for the future" (Verhovek, "Teenager to spend life in prison" 14A). A Kinkel neighbor illustrates the conflicted vision, arguing that there were two sides to the boy:

I always thought he had a good relationship with his parents. They never really bicker or anything. When he's around his parents, I think he's a totally different person than when he's around his peers. It's like Jekyll and Hyde (Green and Philips A01).

Kinkel is described as freckle-faced and skinny in The Oregonian's coverage (Barnard, "Police Find at

Least Two Homemade Bombs"; Green and Filips). Much of the coverage uses similar adjectives to describe Kip Kinkel as average. A Register-Guard reporter also describes Kinkel in terms that focus on his youth:

He barely looks 12, let alone 15. He has an altar boy's face, a Boy Scout's haircut and melancholy eyes that scanned a crowded courtroom Friday with a seeming mixture of curiosity and confusion. Then he stood, dwarfed by his two attorneys on either side, and grasped a piece of paper charging him as an adult with four counts of aggravated murder (Hartman, "Boy charged" 1A).

At his sentencing, one of Kinkel's victims, a medical worker who worked with Kinkel, and the friend he warned to stay home from school the day of the shooting are all stuck by how pale the boy appears, according to The Register-Guard. His victim whispers, "He looks awful young. He looks like a kid," while his friend also notes that he "seemed so pale" (Neville, "The scene" 9A). The health worker, who saw Kinkel two weeks before the sentencing hearing, also comments on Kinkel's appearance: "I think he's deteriorated significantly. He seemed so pale and frail" (9A). A Register-Guard columnist makes a similar observation of Kinkel:

We only had seconds to study his face, paler than the cream-colored skirt around the defense table. He met no one's gaze as he used both shackled hands to pull out his chair. He sank into it and immediately placed his forehead on the laminated tabletop. . .

The face everyone wanted to search for answers was unavailable. He didn't lift his head even when his shoulders shook with weeping as a detective testified about the murder of his mother (McCowan, "Target" 1D).

Pointing out that other students thought Kinkel "often talked wildly about bloody killings," The Register-Guard argues that teachers saw a different Kip Kinkel. The paper quotes Superintendent Jamon Kent arguing that teachers didn't see anything abnormal: "This was a student they considered an average, everyday kid," he says (Mortenson, "School, law officers defend decision" 1A). Kent further argues that students didn't report Kip Kinkel's frequent references to "death, torture and killing" (Hartman, "Boy charged as adult" 11A).

The newspapers repeatedly present a conflicted vision of Kip Kinkel. Adults, The Register-Guard explains, had "varying experiences with Kinkel, from those who called him 'rude' and 'destructive' to a

neighborhood woman who say him as a "sweet shy, lonely boy who sometimes stopped to chat" (Hartman, "Boy charged as adult" 11A). The New York Times also notes the conflicted image of Kinkel:

The picture of him that has emerged since the shooting on Thursday at his school and his home is split: The boy with a great sense of humor, as well as that terrible temper. The teen-ager who built tree houses for his friends, and tortured squirrels and chipmunks. The polite youngster who behaved impeccably around adults and was a tough-talking mischief-maker at school ("In school shooting, one youth's 2 sides" A1).

According to The New York Times, opinions in the Kinkels' neighborhood also varied about Kip: "Some neighbors who socialized with the Kinkel family at barbecues said they had never detected any trouble in the family. But others said they had noticed that Kip was going through a 'Gothic phase,' and wearing black" (Goodstein 20A). The Oregonian notes a similar discrepancy in how people saw Kip Kinkel:

"He's a little, skinny kid. He's always been a nice kid," said Nanci Cavanaugh, a neighbor whose 12-year-old daughter has played with Kinkel for years. "He takes care of people's yards here in the neighborhood. He's been over here and played hide-and-seek on the property" (Green and Filips A01).

In addition to the contrast between Kip Kinkel's own personality and behavior, the newspapers also paint a contrast between Kip and the rest of the Kinkel family. The New York Times isn't alone in pointing to the dichotomy between the Kinkels and their son. All three newspapers have articles with leads that read something like The New York Times':

His parents were popular teachers at two high schools in Springfield, Ore. His older sister is a college cheerleader who has won honors in national cheerleading competitions.

But Kipland Kinkel, known as Kip, had a reputation of a different kind in the community where his family was so well regarded. In his middle school yearbook, the freckle-faced boy was named "Most Likely to Start World War III" (Goodstein 20A).

The Kinkel parents and Kristen Kinkel are collectively presented as physically active (Bill Kinkel play tennis; Faith Kinkel hikes; Kristin Kinkel cheerleads). Kip Kinkel, The New York Times, reports, used to play sports before undergoing "a marked change in personality" (Egan 1A). The Times quotes a former coach, who knew the family well: "It was an excellent

family. Good people. Kip had a temper though. If he didn't get his way, he would kick and shout" (Egan 1A).

The New York Times uses a fellow student's testimony to paint Kinkel as an angry individual seeking revenge: "He said on the bus that he was mad and he was going to do something stupid. He's a mean kid. He'd said some horrible things to me before" (1A).

HEROES

There are three to four students mentioned as heroes in the coverage, however, Jake Ryker is most consistently placed in that role. Ryker appears in five Oregonian articles (compared to two articles that include other heroes). He appears in nine Register-Guard articles. The other heroes also appear in nine Register-Guard articles. The New York Times focuses on Ryker four times, while mentioning the other heroes three. The Register Guard describes him in a front-page headline on page one of the Sunday paper as the "humble hero" who "took his chance." The paper's depiction of Jake Ryker plays up the chivalrous quality of his action. When the shooting started, Ryker says he responded by first trying to save his girlfriend,

Jennifer Alldredge: "I pushed Jen over and tried to get her behind me. I'm pretty sure that's when I got hit" (Mosley, "Humble Hero" 6A). Ryker says seeing her wounded compelled him to act: "I saw her shot and said, 'That's enough'. . .I got up, and things just sort of slowed down" (1A). The reporter goes on to describe Ryker's "heroic" actions:

Ryker stood just as he heard the 'click, click' of the gunman trying to fire his rifle with an empty ammunition clip. Without thinking, he knew it was time to act. 'I heard that 'click,' and it was as loud as if someone was banging on a brass gong,' he said. 'And then I remember knocking him down" (6A).

The reporter writes that the reaction others have "since described as heroic was mere instinct," according to Ryker. The reporter also mentions that Ryker is a "longtime Boy Scout and church group member" (1A).

According to The Oregonian, both Ryker brothers were heroes at the Time-Out Tavern:

It's a place where you can yell down the bar that's the length of a bowling lane, "Give me a 'short' and drop money into one of the huge iced-tea jars. For Jake and Josh Ryker.

This community inside the tavern wants to send them to Disneyland. (Pancrazio A13).

As one Register-Guard reporter points out, Jake Ryker himself was quick to emphasize "that he was just one of five boys. . .who subdued and disarmed Kinkel" ("Humble Hero 1A). However, the reporter immediately follows Jake Ryker's words by reassigning the role of hero back to Ryker: "But Jake Ryker was the first in the crowded and chaotic lunchroom to grab Kinkel" (1A, 6A).

While acknowledging the role of the other four "teen-age heroes who tackled a boy after he shot 20 students in the high school cafeteria," The Register-Guard repeatedly turns its focus back to Jake Ryker: The aftermath was particularly difficult for the most famous hero, Jacob "Jake" Ryker, who tackled the suspect after being shot and inspired the other boys to help him" (Kidd, "Teen-agers' bravery" 1A).

The Register-Guard describes Walburger, one of the five boys involved in tackling Kip Kinkel, as a helpful person, a weight-lifter and a lifeguard who "reacted instinctively after he saw the shooter fire at fellow students" (Kidd, "Teen-agers' bravery" 10A).

Another student, Mike Peebles who performed CPR on Ben Walker is hailed a hero in The Register-Guard but merely described as a "former lifeguard who gave first aid at the scene to Ben Walker" (Graves and Carter A12).

The mothers of the boys also comment on their actions in The Register-Guard. Walburger's stepmother says she isn't surprised by his actions because "[i]f someone needs help, he's the one who's going to help them" (Kidd, "Teen-agers' bravery" 10A). Barbara Ure, mother of the Ure brothers also hails her sons as heroes: "I never planned to raise heroes, but I guess it this was their one time--and no more" (10A).

The Register-Guard focuses on the fact that all five boys are connected to the Boy Scouts:

The boys said they worked like a team due to their Boy Scout training. The Ures and the Rykers are members of Springfield Boy Scout Troop No. 51. Walburger had been a Scout for several years before recently giving up his membership (Kidd, "Teen-agers' bravery" 10A).

Another Register-Guard article demonstrates the paper's focus on the scouting connection: "A shy hero in baggy jeans and a red Boy Scout T-shirt made a brief and

quiet return Tuesday morning to Thurston High School" (Neville, "Young hero back" 3A).

The Register-Guard's coverage of Mikael

Nickolauson's funeral affirms the idea that anyone has the potential to be a hero. At the boy's funeral a retired minister, Otis Harden, worked to make Nickolauson's death seem less futile. According to The Register-Guard, by quoting from First Corinthians in the Bible's New Testament, Harden "characterized the younger Nickolauson as the ultimate hero in last week's tragedy. 'Greater love hath no man than that he lays down his life for his friend,' Harden said. 'If Mikael hadn't been standing where he was, someone else would have died'" (Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness" 1A).

BEYOND HERO AND VILLAIN

Although Bormann seems to limit his focus of characters to heroes and villains, he does note that to be compelling, a drama "requires plausibility, action, suspense and sympathetic characters" ("Eagleton" 261). Bormann's words suggest that he recognizes the possibility for other characters to emerge in fantasies. Clearly, there are other characters at work

in the media coverage of the shootings at Thurston High School. Significant among those characters are the victims, the faith builders (often pastors), the experts (psychologists and legal experts), and the public safety workers who responded to the Kinkel incident. These characters, while certainly more minor than the main characters, are nonetheless essential to the development of the fantasy.

FAITH AND BILL KINKEL

Faith Kinkel appears seven times as a character in The Register-Guard, four times in The Oregonian, and three times in The New York Times. The Oregonian describes Faith Kinkel as a kind, caring, average woman who loved to teach and "kept close watch over her two children" ("The victims" A01). The Oregonian interviews one student who said Faith Kinkel's turbulent home life wasn't apparent in the classroom: "She was always happy in class. Mrs. Kinkel never seemed like a lady who had problems with her family" (Duin A20). The paper further emphasizes her normalcy, saying that she, "by all reports, never let her daily struggles with a depressed teen-ager into her classroom" (A20). Another article

quotes a student who praises Kinkel's teaching:

"Everybody says she's the best they ever had. I never heard a student say they didn't like her" (Lednicer, "Students mourn" A11).

According to The Oregonian, Faith Kinkel was popular with her fellow teachers, too: "'We have a strong staff, and the kids recognize they're putting aside their personal grief to take care' of them, said Mindy Stinson, assistant principal. 'It's going to be a slow healing process'" (Lednicer, "Students mourn" A11). The reporter writes that fellow teachers "reminisced about the time Kinkel bought a married colleague his first couch and accompanied another to Costa Rica (Lednicer A11).

The New York Times also describes Faith Kinkel as warm and friendly: "Mrs. Kinkel was the favorite Spanish teacher at the high school," said Kevin Rybka. . . "People would try to get her instead of the other teacher" (Goodstein 20A). Like the other two papers, The Register-Guard also portrays Faith Kinkel as a well-loved, favorite teacher: "She was a wonderful teacher," said senior Jamie Mann, 18. . . "There's an empty space in me right now" (Robertson, "Colleagues"

4A). Another student also says that Kinkel was light-hearted: "Whenever you were in a bad mood, she was the teacher who would always make you laugh" (Robertson, "Colleagues" 4A).

According to The Register-Guard, Faith Kinkel was a warm and wonderful woman who delighted both her students, colleagues, and friends. One reporter writes that on the hiking trail, Faith Kinkel was "a cheerful companion who studied wildflowers and animal tracks" (Bishop "Kinkels recalled as caring" 7A). Kinkel's love of foreign culture and travel also came through to her friends: "She entertained her friends with stories from her sometimes-exotic travels, such as those to witness volcanic eruptions and observe giant tree frogs" (7A). One friend describes Kinkel as having a "real gift for fun" (7A). The Register-Guard uses the same friend to describe Faith Kinkel's appearance:

Gunson can still picture the physically fit, 5-foot-5-inch Kinkel standing on a trail, her red hair falling to the middle of her back. She recalled the quirky way Kinkel used her right cheek, in a winking motion, to move her glasses up her nose (7A).

Bill Kinkel is a character ten times in The Register-Guard, three in The Oregonian, and three in The New York Times. For the media Bill Kinkel is both a victim and, as Kip's father, a potential source of blame for his son's actions. The Register-Guard sees a conflict between the Bill Kinkel law enforcement officials describe and the Bill Kinkel that his friends describe. Friends and co-workers "find it hard to believe" that Bill Kinkel owned the handguns his son used in his attacks, even though police were able to determine conclusively that he did (Mosley, "Kinkel's father abhorred guns" 6A). According to one longtime family friend, "It's out of character for (Bill Kinkel) to have guns, because he was not a gun person, at all" (Mosley 6A). A co-worker displays similar doubts that the guns could belong to Bill Kinkel:

I don't know whether he owned (the guns) or not, but I have absolutely no reason to believe that he did. Any outdoor adventure of his had to do with floating the Colorado River or something, not with hunting. Nothing would surprise me anymore, but I find that hard to believe" (Mosley 6A).

The New York Times describes Bill Kinkel as warm and friendly:

'He was wonderful,' said Audrey Wood, a neighbor of the Kinkels whose children had taken Spanish with William Kinkel. 'They absolutely loved him. He was a very very jolly, joyful teacher. He was a really popular teacher' (Goodstein 20A).

Despite the praise of parents and students, a Register-Guard columnist notes that Bill Kinkel refused to participate in the counseling Faith sought for their son because of their son's "inappropriate decision making behavior. Extreme interest in guns, knives and explosives" (McCowan, "Denial" 1B).

MIKAEL NICKOLAUSON

Mikael Nickolauson is a character six times in The Register-Guard, four times in The Oregonian, and once in The Times. He is repeatedly described by The Oregonian as "Quiet. Nice. Always with his girlfriend" (Filips: "Two students began typical day" A14). The paper also writes that Nickolauson was "a math whiz who liked computers" ("The Victims" A01). The Register Guard writes that friends and family characterized Nickolauson as "an inveterate tinkerer, computer enthusiast, avid 'Star Trek' fan, card shark and a

student 'easy to teach and eager to please' "

(Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness, antics remembered" 1A).

The Oregonian argues that Mikael "stood apart from the typical high school social swirl," as "a good student whose interests were not part of the mainstream"

(Filips, "Two students began typical day" A14). He was "a math whiz who liked computers and spent hours with close friends playing Magic, a role-playing adventure card game" (Green and Filips A01). The paper says that Nickolauson was independent:

If the material being presented in class didn't interest him, he did his own thing. "He'd always be reading a book in class," said Diann Shuck, 17, who was his partner in Spanish last semester. "Big novels, like Stephen King."

"He made up his own language," said Brad Davidson, 16, Mikael's partner in video productions last semester. "When he did not want to do something in video production, he would write weird characters. It wasn't just a bunch of letters scrambled up. And he wrote it fast, like he was writing English. He was very smart" (Green and Filips A01).

The Register-Guard notes that Nickolauson had a sense of curiosity that "dated to the boy's infancy" (Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness" 1A). At Nickolauson's funeral, a man named Steve remembers the time

Nickolauson came over to his house to play cards: "He was very investigative," the man said. "When he left, every electronic (item) we had, from the VCR to the clock radio, had been tampered with (Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness" 1A). Also at the funeral, the minister recalls that "By six months, he had a very rare habit-- he liked to take things apart including the vacuum cleaner. At age 5 he took apart a light fixture on a school bus--they had to hire an electrician to fix it" (Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness" 1A).

BEN WALKER

Ben Walker is a character four times in The Register-Guard and five times in The Oregonian. Beyond mentioning his death, Ben Walker does not appear in coverage in The New York Times. According to The Register-Guard, murdered student Ben Walker was "enthusiastic for life" (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A). The Oregonian writes that Walker was "remembered by friends for his big smile and outgoing nature" ("The Victims" A01). The Register-Guard focuses on Ben's relationship with his girlfriend: "He loved a girl

called 'Shi,' who's prone to yellow nail polish" (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A). The couple, was "by all accounts...deeply in love (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A):

They were together every single day at his unit or hers. At school Shi's schoolmates would notice him through the classroom window near the end of the period. He'd be leaning against a wall, waiting for Shi. He was 5-foot-7, had brownish red hair, ice blue eyes and dimples 'and the softest lips,' Shi said. 'If I looked up, he would blow me kisses'" (4A).

The Register-Guard emphasizes Ben's relationship with Shi:

This is the thing about Ben. He had an old-fashioned chivalry. He never spoke ill of other people, never flipped classmates any irritations. He bought Shi a Pooh Bear for Christmas because that's what she most liked. When the couple walked down the street, he insisted on being nearest the curb, in case a car would veer or splash mud. He protected her" (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A).

Ben's protection lives on, according to The Register-Guard at the fence at Thurston:

She visited Thurston to light a candle and leave a farewell note to her love. A succession of young men from the school came up to her and draped their arms over her

shoulders or around her waist. They couldn't bring Ben back to take away her pain, but they did what they could to stand in his place (4A).

The Oregonian also focuses on Ben's relationship with Shi noting that Ben "reported how he and his girlfriend had spent the weekend, or their upcoming plans" and "always shared his latest photos of his girlfriend" who worked in the school office, and would "sneak a kiss to Ben" whenever she delivered a message to a student or teacher (Filips A14). Like The Register-Guard, The Oregonian writes about the note Shi leaves at the fence for Ben. The paper focuses on the relationship Ben and Shi shared by quoting a 15-year-old fellow student:

"Him and She [sic], they were so close. Every day he'd wait for her outside our class. They got in a fight right before he got shot. He said, 'Forget this,' and walked away." The next moment, he was hit by the bullet that killed him (Filips A14).

OTHER VICTIMS

The four people murdered by Kip Kinkel receive the most individual treatment from the three newspapers. The rest of the surviving victims (with the exception

of Jake Ryker) do receive varying amounts of coverage but in essence they are interchangeable, nameless, faceless characters who simply fulfill the role of victim. Perhaps victim Betina Lynn summed it up best when she told Kip Kinkel at his sentencing hearing that he had changed everything in her life, even how others perceive her: "My sole identify is now that of 'Victim of the Thurston Shooting.' I don't have a name. I don't have a personality. I don't have interests" (Neville, "Survivors" 1A).

The other victims appear as characters in nine Register-Guard articles, five Oregonian articles, and are not featured in Times articles. Much of the coverage concerning the victims focuses on their attempts to cope with the aftermath of the shooting. Teresa Miltonberger, because she almost died from her wounds, generates a fair amount of individual coverage. The Register-Guard writes that it "must be hard to see Teresa [Miltonberger] quiet, because friends says she's full of energy and anxious to please" (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A). The paper further reports that Teresa Miltonberger is "a favorite of managers at the Springfield School District print shop where she

answers phones and makes copies after school. She plays clarinet in the school band and is a stickler for doing it right. If she fails a performance test, she retakes it again and again until she succeeds" (4A). While Miltonberger receives some individual coverage, another girl left paralyzed immediately after the shooting is never identified by name.

PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL

Police officers, paramedics and firefighters are characters twelve times in The Register-Guard, ten times in The Oregonian, and five times in The New York Times. The EMTS and firefighters are treated as professionals carrying out their jobs. The police receive more complex treatment. The Register-Guard's coverage varies in its treatment of the police. Sometimes the police are treated in the same way the EMTS are, however, the law enforcement officials also serve as scapegoats for the blame. The day before the shooting, Springfield Police Department arrested Kinkel for having a stolen gun at school. Although he was suspended from school (pending an expulsion hearing) and released to his parents, many people argue that the

police should have kept Kinkel incarcerated in a juvenile facility.

One Register-Guard article focuses on the trauma the emergency workers experienced when responding to the incident:

They're trained to keep their cool, to do their jobs in spite of the chaos around them--the mangled wreckage at a car accident, the cries of overwrought relatives, the blood bath left by an act of violence.

It wasn't so easy last Thursday.

At least a half-dozen medics and police officers who raced to the shooting at Thurston High School have children who are students there.

"I know that I was trying to do my job, and I was crying the whole time," Springfield firefighter and medic Paul Esselstyn said (Hartman, "Rescuers wrestled" 1C).

Other coverage, however, questions the police actions. New York Times, for instance, quotes a freshman student at Thurston who argues that the police made the wrong decision when they sent Kip Kinkel home to his parents: "If they did know him, I think they would have kept him in jail" (Goodstein 20A). A Thurston parent expresses a similar viewpoint in The New York Times:

One parent, Angela Graybow, was preparing a paper on school violence for the community college she attends. She said she believed Springfield was not immune. Once Mr. Kinkel had been arrested for carrying a gun, she said, he should not have been released. "They should have had somebody watching him," she said (Egan 1A).

An Oregonian article focuses on Springfield Chief of Police Bill DeForrest and the "tough questions about his department's handling" of Kip Kinkel and the stolen gun the day before the school shooting that DeForrest has been fielding. The article starts by discussing DeForrest's high school background: "As an all-around athlete for Oakridge High School in the early 1960s, Bill DeForrest's problems were simple: catching a muddy football, grabbing his share of rebounds, picking off the runner going for second" (Bates All). The reporter quotes DeForrest defending his officer's decision to release Kip Kinkel to his parents "both respected members of the community": "The decision to was entirely appropriate. You can't judge it in terms of what happened 24 hours later" (All).

The Register-Guard also writes about DeForrest's attempts to defend his officers:

DeForrest said the officer determined that Kinkel was remorseful and posed no threat to himself or others at that time. The officers also determined that Kinkel's background and his stable home and family situation warranted a release to parental custody. . 'He made the same decision I would have made,' DeForrest said (Bishop, "Shooting victims" 4C).

The New York Times interviews a freshman who played football with Kinkel at Thurston who says that "the police erred by releasing Kip to his parents. 'If they did know him,' Mr. Willis said, 'I think they would have kept him in jail'" (Goodstein A20).

THE FAITHFUL

Pastors almost exclusively play the role of the faithful. They emerge as characters thirteen times in The Register-Guard, eight times in The Oregonian, and twice in The New York Times. The Register-Guard quotes one pastor who calls for people to turn to God:

We have two choices in a situation like this. We can become despairing and despondent and become utterly useless to everyone around us by turning away from the one who offers us strength and grace and power and faith in a horrible situation like

this, or we can cling to Him with all our strength (Lednicer, "Emergency Worker/Dad/Pastor" A01).

Another Register-Guard article notes that the local churches started offering counseling, prayer, and an impromptu service the day of the shooting. As in the other article, the pastors are allowed to talk about their work to "[t]ry to encourage people, to give comfort, to try to give a sense of sanity and give a perspective of what God wants to do" (Beebe 5A). In The Register-Guard, another pastor says, "Obviously pastors are in a position of faith and healing people with faith also a position of service and helping. This is one of those occasions to help people with the grieving process. . ." (5A).

Although pastors primarily fill the role of the faithful, sometimes other people are cast in that role as well. The Register-Guard, for instance, casts a local woman who is at the fence in the role of a faith builder: "I've been praying a lot," she said. "I've lived her 43 years and nothing like this has ever happened. I'm praying that it never happens anywhere again" (Harwood, "Floral tributes" 9A). Even

Springfield's fire chief becomes a faith builder in The Register-Guard's coverage: "The timing of that shift change was a miracle. It was an act of God," said Dennis Murphy, Springfield's chief of fire and life safety (Robertson, "Team effort saves lives" 8A).

In a contrast to The Register-Guard's reliance on pastors to build faith, The New York Times uses one to advance a secular solution. The Rev. Polly Moak, a Congregational minister, calls for tighter gun control: "Access to guns has to be greatly restricted," she said, watching television camera crews hovering around a knot of weeping girls. "We could become another England. They see the same violent things we do, but they don't have the guns" (Brooke 9A).

OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS

Experts, such as psychologists and researchers, emerge as characters thirteen times in The Register-Guard, eleven in The Oregonian, and four times in The New York Times. Despite their frequent appearance, the experts remain fundamentally nameless and faceless characters whose status as characters stems solely from their authority. They act not so much as characters,

but rather as oracles providing wise answers to questions of why events occurred. In other words, the experts function primarily as agents of the plotlines.

KRISTIN KINKEL

Kristin Kinkel appears as a character just twice in The Oregonian. She appears in seven Register-Guard articles and in three New York Times' articles. Most descriptions of Kristin Kinkel focus on her status as a cheerleader. At Kip Kinkel's sentencing hearing, for instance, The Register-Guard describes his older sister: "Looking frail and weary, the 22-year-old former cheerleader spoke in a soft, methodical voice stopping several times to regain control of her emotions" (Neville, "Sister" 1A). Another Register-Guard article writes notes that as a 21-year-old "award-winning cheerleader" who was "just 10 days into summer term at Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu when word reached her last Thursday of tragedy at home" (Mosley, "Sister" 1A).

Another Register-Guard reporter describes Kristen as weeping when she read a note of support written to her by one of the victim's father. The father says that

Kristen is also a victim: "She's been through hell. She's a victim too, just like the rest of us, and she needs to know that we support her" (Bishop, "112 years" 4A).

A high school friend tells The Register-Guard that Kinkel was close to her family: "Her parents were so proud of her, so supportive of her. They were just really close to her heart. I just can't imagine. It's devastating and I can't imagine what she would be feeling" (Mosley, "Sister" 5A). The reporter notes that the friend's mother "acknowledges that Kristen Kinkel 'has become very independent' since transferring to Hawaii Pacific three years ago as a language student on full scholarship for cheerleading" (5A). Another friend says she isn't surprised Kristen is taking an active role in settling her parents' affairs: "[I]t makes me so proud of her that she can do that. She's always been real strong, and she's always been a leader. You see this tiny person, and you wouldn't believe what's inside there. But she's so smart and so talented. Just like her mom, just like her dad" (5A). The reporter describes Kinkel as "the 'very bubbly' young woman who focused on gymnastics throughout her elementary and

middle school years, has taught at high school cheerleading camps, won a fourth-place award at the College Cheerleading National Championship in Orlando, Florida. (5A). The New York Times also focuses on Kristin's background as a cheerleader, noting that she has "won honors in national cheerleading competitions" (Goodstein 20A).

THE PLOTLINES

TRACING A SCHOOL SHOOTING

As I noted earlier, plotlines are not just what action was taken, but how that action was done and why it was taken. Kinkel's mental health comes close to dominating the action but the question of why Kinkel opened fire on his classmates and killed his parents is an even stronger element of the plotline. The crime, the sentencing, and the details of Kip Kinkel's life also emerge as fantasies. The issue of innocence being lost or stolen is also developed as a plotline in the media coverage.

"Knowing the essential story line makes it easier for the members of the audience to follow along and make sense out of what is happening," Bormann explains

("Hostage Release" 135). "When we are drawn into these scripts we share the social reality they portray with their implied values, motives, and explanations."

Bormann asserts that people use fantasies to re-establish a sense of order in their world. An Oregonian staff member taps into that concept in a column, writing that everyone "entertains the hope of making some sense of the Springfield bloodshed. That," he writes, "would allow us to bring back some sense of order--and comfort--to a world that is shattered too often by such horrors" Reinhard D14).

TRYING TO ANSWER THE QUESTION: WHY?

The first job of a news article is to report the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a story. These articles are no exception. There are of course, the explanations of the sequence of events but what emerges as a fantasy is not the rudimentary order of events but rather the search to understand why Kip Kinkel killed his parents and then went to school and shot his fellow classmates. The plotline of why Kinkel committed his crimes appears six times in The Oregonian, ten times in

The Register-Guard, and twice in The New York Times. An Oregonian columnist expresses his need to understand why:

How can anyone hope to fathom the wicked mix of madness and rage and premeditation behind all our recent schoolhouse slaughters? But still we ask: Why are our days plagued by a burst-gunbursts--of such horror stories?"

Why? Why did Kipland Kinkel climb atop a table in the Thurston High School cafeteria and mow down his schoolmates? Why do two children--and Kinkel's parents, back at home--lie dead? Why were 23 other children injured - some critically--by the shooting or the ensuing mayhem? Why?

There is no neat answer, of course, though we ask anyway. We all entertain the hope of making some sense of order--and comfort--to a world that is shattered too often by such horrors. That would allow us to wrap these tragedies up in a neat box of explanations and three-point action plans to this kind of carnage never happens again (Reinhard D14).

Another Oregonian columnist argues that anger is at the root of the shooting. "Why are we so angry?" he wonders. "We have become a nation of meanness, of road rage and indiscriminate killings. . . . No one knows what made Kip Kinkel so angry." (Woodward B01).

The Register-Guard turns to an expert to explain the shooting: "This didn't happen all across the country, and it didn't happen because the country is going down the drain or the world is falling apart. This was a collision. It happened because a very sick kid got hold of a gun" (Foster 4A).

The Register-Guard argues that Oregonians are wondering "in anguish how to prevent another school massacre" (Esteve 3A). The problem is so great that even Oregon's governor, John Kitzhaber is left with "just this sense of sadness and hopelessness. This big question of why? There weren't any answers to that" (3A). The Register-Guard notes that some people want to lay the blame for the shooting at the feet of Bill and Faith Kinkel, but the paper interviews the couple's friends who deny they deserve the blame: "It really hurts me to hear people say, 'Boy, those parents. If they did their job...' Well, they did do their job. I think they did everything they could" (Bishop, "Kinkels recalled as caring" 1A, 7A).

The New York Times notes that there may never be an answer to why Kip Kinkel killed his parents and then went to school and shot his classmates:

In many ways, the teen-ager's reasons for his violent rampage remain unfathomable. According to court papers, he told police investigators that he felt he had 'no choice' but to kill, and he later elaborated to psychiatrist: 'I had to be 100 percent. No one is perfect, though. Lots of times, life sucked. With my parents, if I didn't do the best, I was an embarrassment to my parents" (Verhovek, "Teen-ager pleads guilty" 14A).

The Times also notes that the survivors of Jonesboro killings, including Suzanne Wilson whose 11-year-old daughter was killed, haven't found any answers:

Ms. Wilson doesn't know where to lay blame: maybe on parenting skills, maybe violence on television, maybe violent lyrics, in popular music. She just knows that the world she thought her children lived in is drastically out of kilter. "We used to be able to warn our children about bad things, like getting in a car with a stranger and things like that," she said. "But now they have to worry about their peers, the person they think is their friend. I think the whole United States needs to take a look at this. These kids are at war with each other (Bragg 8A).

EXPERTS' ACCOUNTS

All three newspapers turn to experts a total of thirty-four times to explain Kip Kinkel and his actions. Experts appear nineteen times in The Register-

Guard, eleven in The Oregonian, and four in The New York Times. Initially, in the early coverage, the experts focus on why the incident occurred. The coverage of Kinkel's sentencing also has experts focused on why, but this time their focus is on why legal strategy is employed and why Kinkel went to school and killed two boys. The New York Times turns to expert psychologists and researchers to try and explain what the newspaper terms "the disturbing trend" of school shootings. The experts talk about the shift from single-victim shootings to multiple shootings.

The role media violence may play in the shootings is a significant theme in opinions of the experts interviewed by The New York Times. One New York Times expert, Dr. Alvin Poussaint, of Harvard Medical Center's Judge Baker Children's Center" argues that movies blur the lines between the good guys and the bad guys: "Children now say in a proud voice that the violence doesn't upset them, as if that's part of growing up. What's the message there, that their parents want them to be indifferent to violence, numb to the pain it causes?" (Lewin 20A). Another expert, Richard Gallagher, a psychologist who directs the New

York University Child Study Center's parenting clinic, argues that there may be a link between the media coverage of school shootings and subsequent shootings:

We know how adolescents are influenced by hearing about suicide. . . There is a kind of contagion with these events: when they get a lot of attention, it's as if the barrier that kept it from happening gets broken" (20A).

Another Times expert, Bill Bond, principle of the Jonesboro middle school involved in a school shooting, also points to the media:

You have to understand how a troubled 14-year-old boy thinks. Attention is attention and this is the ultimate attention getting. I mean getting your picture on the cover of Time and Newsweek. That is going out in a blaze of glory. I used to be a troubled kid myself and I can tell you, you could love me or hate me but you were not going to ignore me. We have to understand that (Bragg 8A).

Another Times expert, Ronald Stephens of the National School Safety Center, also blames the media: "Kids aren't born violent; it's learned behavior. This is some idea that kids have absorbed about how it's done" (Lewin 20A). The Times uses author Sissela Bok to support Stephens' claim:

We have movie role models showing violence as fun, and video games where you kill, and get rewarded for killing, for hours and hours. For some young people, it's hard to distinguish between the fantasy and the reality. It is a very combustible mix, enraged young people with access to semiautomatic weapons, exposed to violence as entertainment, violence shown as exciting and thrilling" (Lewin 20A).

The New York Times experts also offer solutions arguing that "making access to guns more difficult and teaching young people to react quickly to any clue that an acquaintance is considering violence" are two ways to combat school shootings (Lewin 20A). Gun control emerges as a plot element repeatedly, appearing five times in The Oregonian, ten times in The Register-Guard, and four times in The New York Times.

In The New York Times, Dr. Poussaint urges parents and teachers to teach children to come forward about possible threats:

They should report it to a counselor, a principal, parents. If you're so angry, if you're talking about shooting, you've got mental problems and you need help. A lot of deaths could be prevented if we responded to the clues people give in advance" (Lewin 20A).

Times expert Stephens also says student reporting is key: "We need to encourage kids to break the code of silence about guns and threats" (20A).

The experts also discuss Kinkel's mental health. In fact, as Kinkel's mental state becomes more of an issue in the story (especially at his sentencing hearing), experts begin to focus on it. All three papers include references to Kinkel's mental health and all three quote experts on it. Mental illness emerges as a plotline in eight Oregonian articles, twelve Register-Guard articles, and three New York Times articles. At his sentencing, one expert testifies that he believes Kinkel could be rehabilitated: "In 25 or 30 years, I think he can be safely returned to the community. I'd be happy to have him as my neighbor if those conditions were met [consistent counseling and medications]" (Bernstein, "Kinkel's mental condition" B01). The New York Times explores the issue of charging Kinkel as an adult rather than as a juvenile like the two boys responsible for the Jonesboro shootings. Times' expert Martin Guggenheim, a professor at New York University School of Law, attributes the shift in how juvenile offenders are treated to a loss: "We've

lost our faith in the rehabilitative ideal, and that loss of faith has come from the left and the right" (Glaberson 14A). Another expert, a Portland family and juvenile court judge, argues against sentencing juveniles as adults: "Look at who they're living with. They're living with criminals, and that's what they're going to learn to be" (Glaberson 14A). Another Times' expert agrees with the judge: "If you try a kid as an adult, he comes out worse. He is more likely to be rearrested, and he is more likely to be rearrested sooner" (Glaberson 14A).

Noting the long-term tradition of treating children as individuals not necessarily capable of forming the "malevolent intent of their adult counterparts," The Times assumes the mantel of expert in one news article, arguing that there has been a change in the way juveniles are viewed:

But when anger against juvenile crime began rising in the 1970's and 1980's, critics found a ready culprit in what they said was the permissive attitude of the juvenile justice system. Long before the schoolyard shootings, there were media images of tough teen-agers who played the system's weaknesses. In the movies, and sometimes on the real streets, adult drug dealers used

children as couriers because children were immune from meaningful prosecution (Glaberson 14A).

The Oregonian offers experts who focus on gun control. The paper argues that the "Springfield shootings appear certain to spark a new debate about youth gun violence that has been largely missing in the Oregon Legislature" (Mapes A23). Another Democratic state legislator also urges gun-control action: "Every single person who is upset today needs to call their (sic) legislative candidates to ask what their position is on gun violence. We've had this huge problem and we couldn't even get a discussion" (A23). The National Rifle Association is introduced as the opposing expert in The Oregonian's coverage. The organization's executive vice president tells the paper, "What they should be doing out there around the country is enforcing to the maximum the laws that we have on the books already" (A23).

THE CRIME

Another significant plotline involves the recounting of the crime itself, retold in many ways almost

identically in all three papers. The crime emerges as a plotline in thirteen Oregonian articles, ten Register-Guard articles, and two New York Times articles.

Students who witness the attack tell all three papers that they didn't know what was going on at first. As one student explained to The New York Times, she thought it was a play: "He kicked the door, and he was in this trench coat, and I thought it was part of the play that we were supposed to have today. Then people started falling and screaming and bleeding. People were pushing to get out (Egan A1). Kinkel's identity was known almost from the beginning of the coverage because so many students were eyewitnesses to the attack. In addition, Kip Kinkel's grandmother confirmed his identity: "Kip is my grandson; he murdered his mother and father" (Egan A1).

At Kinkel's sentencing hearing the details of the crimes he committed are finally reported. In Kinkel's own words, both through his tape recorded confession and his journal, detectives and prosecutors present a picture of a boy obsessed with death who methodically carried out the murder of his parents and his classmates. The Register-Guard notes that Kinkel's

writings are "filled with violent images and show him questioning his sanity, and wishing death for himself and fellow students" (Bishop, "Sentencing" 1A). The Register-Guard says that in his journal, Kinkel writes, "My head just doesn't work right. I know I should be happy with what I have, but I hate living" (Bishop, "sentencing" 9A).

At his sentencing hearing, experts testify that Kinkel suffers from brain abnormalities and that he hears voices. The New York Times notes that the voices Kinkel heard had distinct roles: "One of the voices would call Mr. Kinkel names, a second would tell him to kill and the third would discuss the other two, Dr. Sack said" ("Live in Fear" A11).

Readers are given insight into Kip Kinkel's personal writings, and they are also given details of the crime. The Register-Guard reports that Kip Kinkel killed his father first and how a "chemical test showed Kip Kinkel used tissues to wipe his father's blood off a counter in the kitchen where he's shot him in the head" (Bishop, "Sentencing" 9A). The paper also reports that Faith Kinkel was shot six times, while Bill Kinkel was shot only once (9A). The reporter further notes that

Kip Kinkel only cried once during the testimony on the first day of his sentencing hearing: "He cried only once, a minute after hearing a tape recording when he confessed to a detective, 'I told her I loved her,' just before he shot his mother" (9A).

The New York Times reports that when Kinkel got to school, he "used a semiautomatic rifle in the school cafeteria, spraying the room with about 50 rounds in a minute and a half before some students managed to wrestle him to the floor" (Verhovek, "Teenager to spend life" A14). The Register-Guard quotes eye-witnesses who testify that Kinkel seemed to take specific aim at some students: "It looked like aimed at her head," says one student testifying about Teresa Miltonberger's shooting (Bishop, "Sentencing" 9A). Other eye-witnesses describe how Kip Kinkel put his rifle directly on the heads of both Ben Walker and Mikael Nickolauson, the two boys he killed. He even stopped to load his gun when it didn't fire the first time he tried to shoot Walker: "Underwood said Kinkel loaded a bullet into the rifle, 'looked frustrated. Then he shot him'" (9A).

FINDING THE FANTASY

Once the critic has identified evidence of shared fantasies and coded the artifact for the different fantasies at work in the sources, Foss says that the critic is ready to move on to the construction of rhetorical vision. This involves seeking patterns in the fantasy themes and constructing a rhetorical vision from the patterns. As Foss notes, "[b]y linking setting themes with the appropriate characters and actions, the critic can discover if more than one rhetorical vision exists in the rhetoric" (129).

Before proceeding, it is worth reviewing the terminology used in fantasy theme analysis. Fantasy themes of setting, characters and plotlines are the smallest unit of analysis. When fantasy themes chain-out through a group or through society, they form a rhetorical vision (Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 134). When similar scenarios involving the same settings, characters, and plotlines are shared by members of a community, they form a rhetorical vision known as a fantasy type (Foss 124). A fantasy type is a stock rhetorical vision that appears repeatedly in the

rhetoric of a group (Bormann, "Fantasy Theme Analysis and Rhetorical Theory" 452). As Foss writes:

Once a fantasy type has developed, rhetors do not need to provide the audience with details about the specific characters engaging in actions in particular settings. They simply state the general story line of the fantasy type, and the audience is able to call up the other details of the entire scenario (124).

Rhetorical visions are themselves both a unit of analysis in fantasy theme analysis and a "unified putting together of the various shared fantasies" (Bormann, "Symbolic Convergence Theory" 114). As Bormann writes, "When we share a fantasy theme we make sense out of what prior to that time may have been a confusing state of affairs, and we do so in common with the others who share the fantasy with us" (Bormann, "Fantasy Theme Analysis and Rhetorical Theory" 454). Bormann also writes that rhetorical fantasies stem from people's needs to share narratives "that account for their experiences and their hopes and fears" (Bormann, "Homo Narrans" 130). These narratives "are coherent accounts of experiences in the past or envisioned in

the future that simplify and form the social reality of the participants ("Homo Narrans" 134).

Having concluded my analysis, I am ready to reveal the way that the fantasy themes I have identified link together to form rhetorical visions. I am further prepared to begin my discussion of how this analysis contributes to my understanding of the story of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School, and how it developed in the three newspapers.

INTERPRETATIONS

"In 25 years as a cop, I never thought I'd be walking through a cafeteria of wounded kids, looking to see if one of them was my daughter," Sgt. Mike Wisdom, Springfield Police Department.

FINDING THE RHETORICAL VISION

According to Bormann, fantasies "provide a structured, understandable, and meaningful interpretation of what happened" (Television Coverage 134). This interpretation then provides the social reality that "makes sense out of the blooming buzzing confusion of the experience." As Foss writes, fantasy themes "are designed to create the most credible interpretation of experience or the most comprehensible forms for making sense out of experience" (124). This common ground is developed through the sharing of the fantasy. Fantasy types develop when people in the same community share similar scenarios involving the same scenes, characters, and settings. They also serve as a unit of analysis in fantasy theme criticism. If they are compelling, if they speak convincingly to people's 'here-and-now' problems in a dramatic form, then the symbolic ground found through fantasy types becomes

even more encompassing as the rhetorical vision emerges (Jackson 5).

These rhetorical visions emerge when fantasy themes chain out through a society (Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 398). Analyzing these chains and their consequent rhetorical visions offers a vantage point into the dramas, or rhetorical visions, that shape societies. Rhetorical visions are a "unified putting-together of the various scripts that gives the participants a broader view of things" (Bormann, "Homo Narrans" 133). Bormann argues that shared fantasies are "coherent accounts of experience...that simplify and form the social reality of the participants" (134). According to Bormann, communities don't always share just one understanding of events: "Fantasy themes are always slanted, ordered, and interpreted; they provide a rhetorical means for large segments of the audience to account for and explain the same experiences or events in different ways" (134). This is particularly significant in the coverage the three newspapers devoted to the story of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School. The papers advance two conflicting visions that seek to account for the event.

Each is a complete, composite drama but each accounts presents Kip Kinkel and his actions in a different manner. The newspapers' fantasies play into what Bormann characterizes as a viable rhetoric's need to "accommodate the community to the changes that accompany its unfolding history" (135). Bormann also notes that rhetoric must "deal with anxiety aroused by times of trouble, with failure as well as success" (135). There is little doubt that the Thurston shootings created a moment of anxiety for people. Addressing that trouble leads to the development of two very different visions: the Fantasy of the Good Life Gone Awry and the Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place.

There are two Springfields that emerge in the newspaper coverage of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School. One is the town where life is good and one is the town where life isn't so good. In these rhetorical visions two distinct stories of the crime are developed and two distinct, comprehensive rhetorical visions emerge. In the Fantasy of the Good Life, Springfield is a good town with good people. In the Fantasy of the Dangerous Place, Springfield is a

redneck town with southern roots and trailer trash. In one vision, Kip Kinkel is a confused kid who didn't seem like the kind of person who would commit such acts. In the other vision, he is a super-predator; evil and hellbent on destroying his classmates and parents. In one vision his parents are the perfect pair, educated professionals doing their best to help their confused son. In the other, the Kinkels, especially Bill Kinkel, are parents who failed their child and are potential scapegoats for the crime. In one vision Springfield is a treed green oasis of small town goodness, a western Mayberry where father knows best. In the other, Springfield is a rural redneck town, where parents kill their children and children kill their parents. In one, teen love is idyllic. In the other, we live in a world gone mad where people are very angry, very dangerous, and schools certainly aren't safe places for children.

THE FANTASY OF THE GOOD LIFE GONE AWRY

The characters, settings, and plotlines of the Good Life are a distinct blend of elements combined to give the most positive spin on the community, the

victims and even Kip Kinkel. In this vision, the Kinkel home is described as upscale, pastoral and normal. For instance, one Oregonian reporter describes the Kinkels' home as being "nestled among the fir trees just north of this city" (Barnard, "Police Find at Least Two Homemade Bombs" A01). Another Oregonian article describes the home as located "Five miles east of the school, up the emerald McKenzie River Valley" (Baker A23). The pastoral setting is further emphasized when The Register-Guard points out the name of the Kinkels' neighborhood: "The first act of this horror story had played out earlier in the family home. It's in wooded highlands above the McKenzie Valley, off Deerhorn Road in. . .a subdivision named, ironically, Shangri-La" (Bishoff C5). The New York Times also mentions the pastoral setting of the Kinkel home, describing its location as "in the green hills east of Springfield" (Egan 1A). The New York Times also notes the name of the Kinkels' "wooded neighborhood...at the foothills of the Cascades by the McKenzie River. . .where houses sit on two to five acres" (Goodstein 20A).

In later coverage of the event, the veil of secrecy is lifted from the Kinkel's home as it becomes

the setting for describing both Kip Kinkel's obsession with violence and the murder of his parents. The Register-Guard emphasizes the pastoral setting of the home while also describing the bizarre setting Bill and Faith Kinkel's bodies were discovered in:

[O]fficers drove to the family's secluded home in a heavily wooded rural subdivision. . . They found a sliding glass door unlocked and heard the strains of "Romeo and Juliet" playing continuously on the CD player. Inside, they found Bill Kinkel's body in a locked bathroom on the main floor. He was covered with a sheet and had a single bullet wound behind and above his right ear. . . (Neville, "Scene" 9A).

A Register-Guard columnist notes the seeming normalcy of the Kinkel home from crime scene photos presented at the sentencing hearing:

In crime scene photos, however, it was familiar details in the Kinkel home--not their unimaginable deaths--that made you mourn the loss of these much-loved teachers. A jar on the breakfast bar holds cooking utensils you might find in your own kitchen. You imagine a brown paper bag on a table contains groceries Faith intended to cook that night (McCowan D1).

Just as the Kinkel home is presented in a manner that seems to contradict both the crimes committed in

it and the crimes launched from it, the Kinkels, including Kip and his parents are also presented in a different manner. In the Good Life, Kip Kinkel is not an evil killer. He is a confused, possibly mentally ill boy who never seemed like the type of boy who would commit murder.

In The Register-Guard one student, Melissa Hauk describes Kinkel as the funny kid who sat next to her in freshman English: "He's a wild guy, but not that threatening. He's gotten into fights, but he's not horrible. He'll do stuff jokingwise in class. He's not the type to do this" (Bishoff 1C). The New York Times quotes Kinkel's attorney, Mark Sabitt, who admits that Kinkel has problems but denies that the judge's decision to sentence Kinkel to life in prison is just: "He's a sick kid but he's not a throwaway. He deserves some hope for the future" (Verhovek, "Teenager to spend life in prison" 14A). A Kinkel neighbor illustrates the conflicted vision, arguing that there were two sides to the boy: "I always thought he had a good relationship with his parents. They never really bicker or anything. When he's around his parents, I think he's a totally

different person than when he's around his peers. It's like Jekyll and Hyde" (Green and Filips A01).

Kinkel is described by both The Oregonian and The Register-Guard in adjectives that focus on his normal appearance. The Oregonian writes that he is freckle-faced and skinny (Barnard, "Police Find at Least Two Homemade Bombs"; Green and Filips). A Register-Guard reporter focuses on Kinkel's clean-cut youthful appearance:

He barely looks 12, let alone 15. He has an altar boy's face, a Boy Scout's haircut and melancholy eyes that scanned a crowded courtroom Friday with a seeming mixture of curiosity and confusion. Then he stood, dwarfed by his two attorneys on either side, and grasped a piece of paper charging him as an adult with four counts of aggravated murder (Hartman, "Boy Charged" 1A).

At his sentencing one of Kinkel's victims, a medical worker who worked with Kinkel, and the friend he warned to stay home from school the day of the shooting are all stuck by how pale the boy appears, according to The Register-Guard. His victim whispers, "He looks awful young. He looks like a kid," while his friend also notes that he "seemed so pale" (Neville, "The scene" 9A). The health worker, who saw Kinkel two

weeks before the sentencing hearing, also comments on Kinkel's appearance: "I think he's deteriorated significantly. He seemed so pale and frail" (9A). A Register-Guard columnist makes a similar observation of Kinkel:

We only had seconds to study his face, paler than the cream-colored skirt around the defense table. He meets no one's gaze as he used both shackled hands to pull out his chair. He sank into it and immediately placed his forehead on the laminated tabletop...

The face everyone wanted to search for answers was unavailable. He didn't lift his head even when his shoulders shook with weeping as a detective testified about the murder of his mother (McCowan, "Target" 1D).

The Register-Guard quotes Superintendent Jamon Kent arguing that teachers didn't see any thing abnormal: "This was a student they considered an average, everyday kid," he says (Mortenson, "School, law officers defend decision" 1A). The Register-Guard interviews a neighborhood woman who says Kip Kinkel was a "sweet shy, lonely boy who sometimes stopped to chat" (Hartman, "Boy charged as adult" 11A). The New York Times notes there is a conflicted image of Kinkel:

The picture of him that has emerged since the shooting on Thursday at his school and his home is split: The boy with a great sense of humor, as well as that terrible temper. The teen-ager who built tree houses for his friends, and tortured squirrels and chipmunks. The polite youngster who behaved impeccably around adults and was a tough-talking mischief-maker at school" ("In school shooting, one youth's 2 sides").

According to The New York Times, opinions in the Kinkels' neighborhood also varied about Kip: "Some neighbors who socialized with the Kinkel family at barbecues said they had never detected any trouble in the family. But others said they had noticed that Kip was going through a 'Gothic phase,' and wearing black" (Goodstein 20A). The Oregonian also paints a picture of Kinkel as a nice boy: "'He's a little, skinny kid. He's always been a nice kid," said Nanci Cavanaugh, a neighbor whose 12-year-old daughter has played with Kinkel for years. "He takes care of people's yards here in the neighborhood. He's been over here and played hide-and-seek on the property" (Green and Filips, "The suspect" A01).

The "normal" Kip comes from a family that a former coach, who "knew the family well" describes to The New

York Times as "an excellent family. Good people" (Egan, "Shootings in a school: The overview").

While the three newspapers do note that Kinkel wasn't always seen as so "average" by neighbors and especially not by other children, in the Good Life, his family is described as very normal. Often, this normalcy is established by contrasting his parents, Faith and Bill, and his sister, Kristin, with Kip. The Kinkel parents and Kristen Kinkel are collectively presented as physically active. Bill Kinkel plays tennis. Faith Kinkel hikes. Kristin Kinkel cheerleads. Kip, The New York Times, reports, used to play sports before undergoing "a marked change in personality" (Egan 1A).

The New York Times isn't alone in pointing to the dichotomy between the Kinkels and their son. All three newspapers have articles with leads that read something like The New York Times:

His parents were popular teachers at two high schools in Springfield, Ore. His older sister is a college cheerleader who has won honors in national cheerleading competitions.

But Kipland Kinkel, known as Kip, had a reputation of a different kind in the community where his family was so well

regarded. In his middle school yearbook, the freckle-faced boy was named "Most Likely to Start World War III" (Goodstein 20A).

Kip Kinkel may be described as "average," but in the Good Life Bill, Faith and Kristin are all presented as better than average. The Oregonian describes Faith Kinkel as a kind, caring, average woman who loved to teach and "kept close watch over her two children" ("The victims" A01). Another Oregonian article quotes a student who praises Kinkel's teaching: "Everybody says she's the best they ever had. I never heard a student say they didn't like her" (Lednicer, "Students mourn" A11). According to The Oregonian, Faith Kinkel was popular with her fellow teachers too, who "reminisced about the time Kinkel bought a married colleague his first couch and accompanied another to Costa Rica" (A11).

The New York Times also describes Faith Kinkel as warm and friendly: "Mrs. Kinkel was the favorite Spanish teacher at the high school," said Kevin Rybka. . . "People would try to get her instead of the other teacher" (Goodstein 20A). Like the other two papers, The Register-Guard also portrays Faith Kinkel as a

well-loved, favorite teacher: "She was a wonderful teachers," said senior Jamie Mann, 18..."There's an empty space in me right now" (Robertson, "Colleagues" 4A).

Another student says that Kinkel was light-hearted: "Whenever you were in a bad mood, she was the teacher who would always make you laugh" (4A).

According to The Register-Guard, Faith Kinkel was a warm and wonderful woman who delighted both her students, colleagues and friends. One reporter writes that on the hiking trail, Faith Kinkel was "a cheerful companion who studied wildflowers and animal tracks" (Bishop "Kinkels recalled as caring" 7A). Kinkel's love of foreign culture and travel also came through to her friends: "She entertained her friends with stories from her sometimes-exotic travels, such as those to witness volcanic eruptions and observe giant tree frogs" (7A). One friend describes Kinkel as having a "real gift for fun" (7A). The Register-Guard uses the same friend to describe Faith Kinkel's appearance:

Gunson can still picture the physically fit, 5-foot-5-inch Kinkel standing on a trail, her red hair falling to the middle of her back. She recalled the quirky way Kinkel used her right cheek, in a winking motion, to move her glasses up her nose (7A).

In this vision, The Register-Guard describes a Bill Kinkel that friends and co-workers can't imagine owning the handguns Kip used in his attacks (Mosley, "Kinkel's father abhorred guns" 6A). According to one longtime family friend, "It's out of character for (Bill Kinkel) to have guns, because he was not a gun person, at all" (Mosley, "Kinkel's father abhorred guns" 6A). A co-worker displays similar doubts that the guns could belong to Bill Kinkel:

I don't know whether he owned (the guns) or not, but I have absolutely no reason to believe that he did. Any outdoor adventure of his had to do with floating the Colorado River or something, not with hunting. Nothing would surprise me anymore, but I find that hard to believe" (Mosley 6A).

The New York Times describes Bill Kinkel as warm and friendly:

"He was wonderful," said Audrey Wood, a neighbor of the Kinkels whose children had taken Spanish with William Kinkel. "They absolutely loved him. He was a very very jolly, joyful teacher. He was a really popular teacher" (Goodstein, Shootings in a school: The suspect).

The Register-Guard notes that some people want to lay the blame for the shooting at the feet of Bill and Faith Kinkel but the paper interviews the couple's friends who deny they deserve the blame: "It really hurts me to hear people say, 'Boy, those parents. If they did their job. . .'" Well, they did do their job. I think they did everything they could" (Bishop, "Kinkels recalled as caring" 1A, 7A).

Like her parents, Kristin is described glowing terms. All three papers focus on her status as an award-winning cheerleader. A high school friend tells The Register-Guard that Kinkel was close to her family: "Her parents were so proud of her, so supportive of her. They were just really close to her heart" (Mosley, "Sister" 5A). The reporter notes that the friend's mother "acknowledges that Kristen Kinkel 'has become very independent' since transferring to Hawaii Pacific three years ago as a language student on full scholarship for cheerleading" (5A). Another friend says she isn't surprised Kristen is taking an active role in settling her parents' affairs: "[I]t makes me so proud of her that she can do that. She's always been real strong, and she's always been a leader. You see this

tiny person, and you wouldn't believe what's inside there. But she's so smart and so talented. Just like her mom, just like her dad" (5A). The reporter describes Kinkel as "the 'very bubbly' young woman who focused on gymnastics throughout her elementary and middle school years, has taught at high school cheerleading camps, won a fourth-place award at the College Cheerleading National Championship in Orlando, Florida" (5A).

It isn't just the Kinkel family that is presented in an idyllic light in the *Fantasy of the Good Life*. The image of Kip Kinkel's victims (with the exception of his parents who are presented in a conflicted manner) is unflaggingly positive. It is almost as if they have no flaws. The Register-Guard assures readers that "It must be hard to see Teresa [Miltonberger] quiet, because friends says she's full of energy and anxious to please" (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A). While Kip's activities are described with an emphasis on useless, harmful or even illegal activities, victims are portrayed as popular and hardworking. Teresa Miltonberger, for instance, is "a favorite of managers at the Springfield School District print shop where she

answers phones and makes copies after school. She plays clarinet in the school band and is a stickler for doing it right. If she fails a performance test, she retakes it again and again until she succeeds" (4A). Similarly, the coverage emphasizes the relative wealth of the Kinkel family (the family takes trips to foreign countries, lives abroad, plays daily tennis games, sails, hikes, and lives in an up-scale neighborhood) while contrasting that with the more limited economics of the two boys Kip Kinkel killed. Mikael's family lives in a toy-littered neighborhood, while Ben Walker's lives in an apartment building. For Walker, "family was most important," The Register-Guard reports: "When his mom was hospitalized, he dropped out of wrestling to help out, friend Patrick Miellke said. "They didn't get enough money to do anything really" (Dietz, Parents shoulder agony 4A).

While the image of Kip Kinkel is of a boy who didn't enjoy life, his victim, Ben Walker was "enthusiastic for life" (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A). Although his family is mentioned as "most important to Ben," only his mother is mentioned by name in The Register-Guard coverage. Instead, the paper

focuses on Ben's relationship with his girlfriend: "He loved a girl called 'Shi,' who's prone to yellow nail polish" (4A):

The couple, was "by all accounts...deeply in love. They were together every single day at his unit or hers. At school Shi's schoolmates would notice him through the classroom window near the end of the period. He'd be leaning against a wall, waiting for Shi. He was 5-foot-7, had brownish red hair, ice blue eyes and dimples 'and the softest lips,' Shi said. 'If I looked up, he would blow me kisses'" (Dietz 4A).

The Register-Guard continually emphasizes Ben's masculinity and his relationship with Shi:

This is the thing about Ben. He had an old-fashioned chivalry. He never spoke ill of other people, never flipped classmates any irritations. He bought Shi a Pooh Bear for Christmas because that's what she most liked. When the couple walked down the street, he insisted on being nearest the curb, in case a car would veer or splash mud. He protected her" (4A).

Ben's protection lives on, according to The Register-Guard at the fence at Thurston:

She visited Thurston to light a candle and leave a farewell note to her love. A succession of young men from the school came up to her and draped their arms over her shoulders or around her waist. They couldn't

bring Ben back to take away her pain, but they did what they could to stand in his place (Dietz, "Parents shoulder agony" 4A).

The Oregonian also focuses on Ben's relationship with Shi noting that Ben "reported how he and his girlfriend had spent the weekend, or their upcoming plans" and "always shared his latest photos of his girlfriend" who worked in the school office, and would "sneak a kiss to Ben" whenever she delivered a message to a student or teacher (Filips A14). Like The Register-Guard, The Oregonian writes about the note Shi leaves at the fence for Ben. The paper highlights the tragic element of the couple's story by quoting a 15-year-old fellow student:

"Him and She [sic], they were so close. Every day he'd wait for her outside our class. They got in a fight right before he got shot. He said, 'Forget this,' and walked away." The next moment, he was hit by the bullet that killed him (Filips A14).

Even when possible flaws are mentioned (a student who, if uninterested in what he should be doing, uses class time to develop his own language, for instance) it is viewed as acceptable, perhaps even admirable

behavior. The Register-Guard notes that Nickolauson had a sense of curiosity that "dated to the boy's infancy" (Bjornstad, "Boy's kindness" 1A). A man named Steve remembers the time Nickolauson came over to his house to play cards: "He was very investigative," the man said. "When he left, every electronic (item) we had, from the VCR to the clock radio, had been tampered with (1A). The minister recalls that "By six months, he had a very rare habit--he liked to take things apart including the vacuum cleaner. At age 5 he took apart a light fixture on a school bus--they had to hire an electrician to fix it" (1A). This behavior, which some people might consider destructive or naughty, is categorized as simple curiosity. Kinkel's early behavior is not described in such kind terms. For instance his early temper tantrums are characterized as angry fits, versus signs that he was "a stubborn little boy." At his sentencing hearing, The Register-Guard quotes prosecutor Caren Tracy who argues that Kinkel had often been violent before the shootings:

For example, she said, there was the time when 6-year-old Kinkel chased and struck an older boy with a steel rod hard enough to cause permanent injury in the arm; the time

Kinkel admitted aiming his rifle at a 'happy Mormon family' in the neighborhood; the time he exploded at his friends when he thought they'd stolen one of his knives; the time he tried to attack his friends with a golf club and kitchen knife after they teased him; the many times he antagonized and fought with a classmate in seventh and eighth grades; his obsession with killing a football player who had roughed him up on the field; and the times he told people he wanted to be the next Unabomber" (Bishop, "Expert" 11A).

In the Good Life, the funerals of Ben Walker and Mikael Nickolauson serve as settings to further emphasize the youthful goodness of Kip Kinkel's victims. The pastor casts Mikael as a hero in his eulogy, and the boy is laid to rest with full military honors. Walker is remembered as "a tender-hearted boy with a 'mischievous sparkle in his eye'" (Hartman and Foster 1A). While Nickolauson is labeled a hero for taking the place of another potential victim, Walker is honored for donating organs to 12 people giving them "the gift of life" (1A). Springfield Mayor Bill Morrisette promises mourners that Ben will live on: "I can assure you that if I carried an organ donated by someone who died, I would be a living memorial for that person. So Ben will live though other people" (1A).

It isn't just the Kinkels' home, the Kinkels, or the victims that are presented in a positive light. In the Good Life, the community of Springfield is a good place where good people are trying to cope with the fall-out of such a horrible event.

The New York Times situates Springfield in a pastoral setting: "One of Oregon's fastest-growing neighborhoods, Thurston has a landscape of bicycle paths, flowering shrubs and neatly kept homes that quickly gives way to cow and horse pastures and the foothills of the Cascades" (Brooke A9). Noting that Thurston is a "10-minute drive from the university city of Eugene" and "shares Oregon's tolerant 'western New England' politics and its high-technology 'Silicon Forest' economy," The New York Times also labels Springfield "solidly middle-class" and notes that the town "45 minutes from the hunting and camping of Willamette National Forest..." (A9). Another New York Times article also focuses on the rural aspect of Springfield: "Springfield is known as a timber town, with a rural feel, though in recent years it has been on an economic upswing with the arrival of computer-chip factories" (Egan A1).

This Springfield is one where local businesses mourn the shootings at Springfield. Patrons at a bar, for instance, rally together to comfort one another and send the Ryker boys, like a pair of Super Bowl heroes to Disneyland. This is the town where the emergency workers, the police and the EMTs wrestle with their own fears to bravely save the lives of children and when that fails, they rally together to honor the dead. At victim Ben Walker's funeral the police and firefighters serve as an honor guard and lay flowers at the boy's casket. As a Register-Guard reporter writes: "Inside the church, members of Springfield's Fire and Life Safety Department stood against the right wall, badges wrapped with black bands. . . Across the parking lot, police kept a picket of TV cameras and other media behind blue tape (Lednicer and Walth A01).

In the Good Life, The Register-Guard and, to a lesser degree, The Oregonian, turn to pastors to act as faith builders. Confronted with a question that no one seems to be able to answer, "Why did Kip Kinkel kill his parents and go to school and kill two students and wound so many others?" the papers turn to the church for an answer. The Register-Guard quotes one pastor who

calls for people to turn to God: "We have two choices in a situation like this," Clarke said. "We can become despairing and despondent and become utterly useless to everyone around us by turning away from the one who offers us strength and grace and power and faith in a horrible situation like this, or we can cling to Him with all our strength" (Lednicer "Emergency Worker/Dad/Pastor" A01). Another Register-Guard article notes that the local churches started offering counseling, prayer, and an impromptu service the day of the shooting. As in the other article, the pastors are allowed to talk about their work to "[t]ry to encourage people, to give comfort, to try to give a sense of sanity and give a perspective of what God wants to do" (Beebe 5A). In The Register-Guard, another pastor says, "Obviously pastors are in a position of faith and healing people with faith also a position of service and helping. This is one of those occasions to help people with the grieving process..." (Beebe 5A).

As the pastors try to offer solutions to the problem facing the community, the papers find local people who also turn to faith to cope with the tragedy. A woman at the fence at Thurston tells The Register-

Guard, for instance, that she has turned to prayer: "I've been praying a lot," she said. "I've lived here 43 years and nothing like this has ever happened. I'm praying that it never happens anywhere again" (Harwood, "Floral tributes" 9A). Even Springfield's fire chief becomes a faith builder in The Register-Guard's coverage: "The timing of that shift change was a miracle. It was an act of God," said Dennis Murphy, Springfield's chief of fire and life safety (Robertson, "Team effort" 8A).

Pastors and churches aren't the only places of hope in this vision. The memorial fence at Thurston also serves as a source of healing and hope in this vision. In the Good Life, the fence is seen as a place where people gather together to hug, cry, and pray. An Oregonian article, for instance, focuses on the flowers, messages, and religious symbols left at the fence:

Under mottled skies, they've left bouquets of daisies, freesia, honeysuckle, call lilies. They've burned candles, written poems and planted crosses with pictures of Jesus.. 'Prayer is not the least, but the most, we can do for another human being,' read one message (Lednicer, "Flowers, messages and prayers" A01).

The Register-Guard describes the fence as a place where people who are part of "the broken heart club" join together to mourn and also focuses on the flowers left at the fence. One Register-Guard article uses the fence to establish a contrast between the world created by people and the world created by nature:

[I]n places, the flowers cover the cyclone fence like a vertical carpet. Like the roses, peonies, snap dragons, baby's breath, carnations and rhododendron branches are growing from the wire and taking it over. Like blooms springing out of sorrow (Mortenson, "Mending fence" 7A).

This Springfield is also home to the brave heroes who stopped Kip Kinkel's rampage. It is worth noting that Jake Ryker plays the dominant role in this fantasy as hero and like Ben Walker his chivalry is emphasized. The Register Guard says Jake Ryker was motivated to act by a desire to save his girlfriend. When the shooting started, Ryker says he responded by first trying to save his girlfriend, Jennifer Alldredge: "I pushed Jen over and tried to get her behind me. I'm pretty sure that's when I got hit" (Mosley, "Humble Hero" 6A). Ryker says seeing her wounded, compelled him to act: "I

saw her shot and said, 'That's enough'...I got up, and things just sort of slowed down" (1A). The reporter goes on to describe Ryker's "heroic" actions:

Ryker stood just as he heard the 'click, click' of the gunman trying to fire his rifle with an empty ammunition clip. Without thinking, he knew it was time to act. 'I heard that 'click,' and it was as loud as if someone was banging on a brass gong,' he said. 'And then I remember knocking him down" (6A).

The reporter writes that the reaction others have "since described as heroic was mere instinct," according to Ryker. The reporter also mentions that Ryker is a "longtime Boy Scout and church group member" (1A).

The Register-Guard reporter admits that Jake Ryker himself is quick to emphasize "that he was just one of five boys. . .who subdued and disarmed Kinkel" (1A). However, the reporter immediately follows Jake Ryker's words by reassigning the role of hero back to Ryker: "But Jake Ryker was the first in the crowded and chaotic lunchroom to grab Kinkel" (1A, 6A).

While acknowledging the role of the other four "teen-age heroes who tackled a boy after he shot 20

students in the high school cafeteria," The Register-Guard repeatedly turns its focus back to Jake Ryker: "The aftermath was particularly difficult for the most famous hero, Jacob "Jake" Ryker, who tackled the suspect after being shot and inspired the other boys to help him" (Kidd, "Teen-agers' bravery" 1A).

For all three newspapers, it seems important to cast the role of hero as a role for a rugged individual acting alone. One boy, who performed CPR on Walker is described in The Register-Guard as a hero. When The Oregonian interviews him, they mention he performed CPR but do not label him a hero. The Register-Guard also writes about the boy who secured the gun after Jake Ryker and the three other boys disarmed Kinkel. The other papers do not acknowledge the role he played.

The Fantasy of the Good Life then offers an account of the crime that appeals to the good in people and life. It creates a reality where beautiful green Springfield is filled with people who are essentially good. Teens find true love that, like the teen lovers in songs "Teen Angel" or "Tell Johnny I Love Him," is star-crossed, ill-fated and tragic. In this world, men (teen boys really) offer protection to women who would

otherwise by victimized by dangerous drivers or assailants with guns. In this world, the community, from the police to patrons of a local bar, are united in a common struggle to understand why bad things happen to good people. Here the Kinkels are an upper-middleclass family with two loving parents and a beautiful daughter who struggle to do their best by their troubled, but not evil son. Kip Kinkel's actions are horrific but he isn't "a throwaway." In this world, the church can offer hope and reasons to understand the abhorrent actions of Kip Kinkel. In this vision, participants are encouraged to see their own lives as more normal and even safer because Kip Kinkel is not the norm. He is the aberration.

THE FANTASY OF THE DANGEROUS BOY, DANGEROUS PLACE

The Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place doesn't present such a rosy view of Springfield, the people who live there, or Kip Kinkel. In the Fantasy of the Dangerous Place, Kip Kinkel is the personified evil of a community that received only what could be expected. His parents ignored obvious warning signs and failed in their duty. Springfield is a redneck

community with southern roots where people own guns. The victims are characters who have no distinct role, the heroes largely ignored, and it is the secular experts who offer opinions, advice, and wisdom.

In this vision, Kip is evil. According to a boy The New York Times interviews, Kinkel abused animals: "He was always talking about what he did to animals. He would like to torture animals and stuff, and tell us about it" (Goodstein 20A). The Oregonian says that Kinkel's journals disclose "his intense alienation, anger, spurned love, fascination with guns and desperate pleas for help" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01). The Oregonian recounts how authorities "heard the strains of 'Romeo and Juliet' playing from a living room CD player" when they arrived at the Kinkels' home on May 21 (A01). In Kip Kinkel's bedroom, the police found a punching bag "with writings that read, 'Nothing can stop me, Know,' (sic) and 'Mr. Self Destruction'" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01).

The Oregonian furthers its depiction of Kinkel's unacceptable behavior by noting that his AOL service account listed his hobbies as "Role-playing games, heavy metal music, violent cartoons/TV, sugared cereal,

throwing rocks at cars and EC Comics" and his occupation as "Student, surfing the Web for info on how to build bombs" (Green and Filips A01). The Oregonian also notes that Kinkel had given a "well-organized, authoritative talk on how to make a bomb," illustrated with "a detailed picture he had drawn of an explosive connected to a clock" (Green and Filips A01). Several students tell The Oregonian that Kinkel talked about guns and bombs often. One even claims to have heard Kinkel and a friend plan the shooting spree earlier in the year on the school bus. Others offer testimony that Kinkel listened to the music of Marilyn Manson and often went shooting at birds and ground animals: "Just out of the blue he'd say, 'I want to kill something.' I think he likes the feelings of killing something. He's really obsessed with guns, bombs, anarchy stuff" (Green and Filips A01). A parent tells The Oregonian that she found Kinkel's behavior disturbing. After Kinkel came to her son's 15th birthday party, gave him a tool to break into cars for a present, and sprayed the word "kill" on the driveway in whipped cream (A01).

At his sentencing hearing, the defense call a number of expert witnesses who testify that Kinkel

suffers from brain abnormalities, hears three voices (who told him to kill), and is mentally ill. At least two of his victims, however, refuse to accept the rationale that Kinkel is mentally ill. Jake Ryker, for instance, bursts out in anger at the hearing: "I don't care if you're sick, you're insane or crazy. I can't stand here and look at you without wanting to kill you" ("Kip Kinkel's sentence" C10). Ryker's girlfriend, victim Jennifer Alldredge has a similar response to Kinkel's mental illness defense and his courtroom behavior: "I want you to know that I am not falling for his poor little mentally sick rich boy. I don't buy the whole act of burying your head in the table" ("Victims paint a picture of pain" 11A). After the judge sentenced Kinkel, Alldredge continued to deny Kinkel's illness: "I really wanted to know why this happened, why the defense tried to come up with these lame excuses of 'He's a schizophrenic'" (Neville, "Healing" 5A).

In the Fantasy of the Dangerous Place, there is no mercy for Kinkel. For the audience member who wants vengeance, this is the vision that includes the calls to retribution that help fulfill that desire. The hero

who stopped his rampage wants to kill him and a victim's mother tells Kinkel she hopes he will feel mental and emotional torment:

It's not going to be long, when you get into prison, that you're going to become someone's little friend--and everyone knows that. . .Death wouldn't have been the answer for you, or for us. To get any kind of justice for you to be tortured and troubled as we are is, to me, the final justice (Neville, "Mother" 17A).

In this vision, Kinkel is a cold-blooded killer who shot two boys in the head, with calculated deliberation. As one eye witness testifies: "I saw Mikael get on the floor. I saw Mr. Kinkel walk up to Mikael, kind of push him down, put the gun to his head and shoot" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01). Another witness says: "He got side by side with Ben Walker, and Kip pulled. . .but the gun didn't fire. Then he cocked it, and he shot him in the head" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01). Detectives testify that Kinkel shot his mother six times. In his taped confession, played in court, Kinkel's own words described how he shot his mother when she came home. He saw her pull into the garage and she carried groceries into the house. On the

tape, Kinkel says, "I told her I loved her" (Bernstein, "Killer's anger" A01).

In this vision Kip Kinkel is not a freckle-faced boy, he is "a boy who acted more like a man":

He seemed experienced in what he was doing. The way he walked in, he seemed like an adult. He looked bigger than just a smaller guy. I thought maybe it was some criminal, somebody who was angry. I thought it was an adult at first (Green, "Injured remember" A11).

He is a killer with "blank eyes" who uses others (O'Neill A13). According to an expert witness, killers like Kinkel have uncompromising minds: "It sees the world as a one-way street. The world is his chessboard, and everyone else is a pawn. From the time he is little, he will do anything to get his way" (O'Neill, "Experts: Inner chaos" A13).

In this vision, the experts are used to paint a picture of Kip Kinkel as a mentally disturbed boy. Here the experts present compelling evidence that Kip Kinkel was so distressed and sending out so many warning signs that his parents should have seen the trouble their son was facing. An expert's testimony at Kinkel's

sentencing hearing allows The Oregonian to argue signs Kip Kinkel was troubled were abundant:

If Kinkel's mother had told him, as she did a Eugene psychologist in 1997, that Kinkel had a fascination with guns and explosives and was severely depressed, Sack said, it would have sent a 'shiver' up his spine and he would have put Kinkel through a full mental-status exam.

The signs, Sack said, should have signaled that Kinkel suffered from much more than the pains of an 'average distressed teen-ager' (Bernstein, "Kinkel's mental condition" B01).

Those signs, another experts testifies included Kip Kinkel's fear that a plague would strike and that "the Disney Corp. would use censorship to take over the country" (Bishop, "Expert" 1A). Kinkel's fears gave him several desires:

He felt a need to accumulate food. He wanted to make bombs in case of Chinese invasion or societal breakdown. He believed the government had implanted a computer chip in his brain to control his thinking. . . . 'His behavior was dominated by psychotic thinking and by mental illness...' (Bishop, "Expert" 1A).

Both The Oregonian's and The Register-Guard's reliance on the experts is secondary to The New York Times. For The Times, the experts play a pivotal role

in characterizing Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School. If one has a profound mystery to be explained (for instance, why Kip Kinkel killed his parents and two of his classmates), an account needs to be offered that will ring true to the audience's pieties or hierarchy of order. In the Fantasy of the Good Life that need is met in part by the ministers who offer expertise and solutions through faith. In contrast, in the Fantasy of the Dangerous Place the focus is on scientific experts who offer rational theories about Kip Kinkel and his crime. In both fantasies, the hierarchy of order is constrained by the audience the rhetor is targeting with her or his rhetoric. The difference between the two visions, and The New York Times' strong emphasis on scientific experts may reflect the basic differences in the three papers' audiences. These experts remind people of the salient controversy and then give a nod to the worth of the controversy from the priests/priestess of the secular or religious order. For The New York Times the priests and priestess are scientific experts and while the other two papers also turn to secular experts, for

The Register-Guard especially, alternative solutions are offered by religious experts.

In Fantasy of the Dangerous Place what constitutes an expert isn't the only fundamental difference. Here, the Kinkel family is less than ideal. In this vision the Kinkels are ineffectual people who are either too clueless to see their son's distress or in denial about his abnormal behavior. A Register-Guard columnist notes that Bill Kinkel refused to participate in the counseling Faith sought for their son because of Kip Kinkel's "inappropriate decision making behavior. Extreme interest in guns, knives and explosives" (McCowan, "Denial" 1B). The journalists also note that Kinkel purchased the guns his son used in the crimes. The same Register-Guard columnist notes that the Kinkels could see the plywood target with the human image Kinkel used for target practice from their deck: "How, you wonder, could parents have overlooked or tolerated this?" (McCowan, "Denial" 1B). Another Register-Guard article makes it clear that Bill Kinkel had warning signs his son had serious problems. Apparently six months before the shooting, "an obviously distraught Bill Kinkel sought the advice of a

stranger in an airport waiting room" in San Diego (Bjornstad "Boy's father" 6A). The expert was Dan Close, a Eugene expert on anti-social behavior and juvenile behavior, and associate professor with the University of Oregon. Close says that he warned Bill Kinkel he had to do something: "I told Bill that he absolutely had to do something--he had to get help before something terrible happened" (6A). Kip "had all the risk factors for becoming dangerously violent" (6A):

He had an unhealthy obsession with guns and violence. He had radically changed his circle of friends. He had experimented with alcohol, smoking and drugs. And he claimed to have killed small animals for enjoyment (6A).

Close recalled the final words he and Kinkel exchanged in the airport: "I told Bill that raising kids is the toughest thing we'll ever do. And Bill said, 'If we survive'" (6A).

The City of Springfield also assumes a different role in the Dangerous vision. This Springfield is a redneck town where guns are prevalent. The Oregonian describes the home of one of Kinkel's victims is as "a

one-story gray house in a modest, toy-littered Springfield neighborhood" (Filips A14). Noting that it was Diane Downs, the mother who shot her three children 15 years ago, who put the former mill town on the map, The Oregonian depicts Springfield as a place dangerous for children:

The city of 50,140 has seen children abused, tortured and murdered--10 in the past five years. Last year, after 3-year-old Tesslynn O'Cull of Springfield was found in a shallow grave--her body allegedly battered and burned by her mother and her mother's boyfriend--the community promised to make child abuse its No. 1 priority" (Baker A23).

Like The Oregonian, The New York Times also focuses on crimes from Springfield's past. In one article, the paper contrasts the natural environment that surrounds Springfield with some of its more violent crimes:

There is no more idyllic spot in May than Springfield, Ore., and its sister city, Eugene, Ann Rule wrote in "Small Sacrifices," a nonfiction work that was a paperback best seller in the late 1980's. "Sheltered by the Cascade Range to the east and the steel-blue and purple ridges of the coastal mountains on the western horizon," Ms. Rule wrote, "the valley was an oasis for pioneers a century ago."

People in Springfield spend their weekends fishing, hunting and rafting, residents said, glad to be away from the

comparative hustle-bustle of Eugene, just across Interstate 5.

But the topic of Ms. Rule's book and yesterday's shooting in a high school cafeteria showed another side of Springfield, a mostly white, blue-collar, timber town turned bedroom community of 55,000 people that has long been overshadowed by Eugene, the home of the University of Oregon.

"Small Sacrifices" focuses on Diane Downs, a 27-year-old mother of three who was convicted in 1984 of shooting herself and her three children, and then falsely claiming that a "shaggy-haired stranger" shot them.

And just last week a 22-year-old Springfield man was convicted of kidnapping, raping and killing his 15-year-old former girlfriend and killing her new boyfriend, 15, and another 13-year-old boy in December 1995. A second defendant is awaiting trial (Rohde, "Oasis" 20A).

In Oregonian coverage, not only does the town have a problem with child abuse, it is "home to the school of hard knocks," while Eugene, separated from Springfield physically only by the Willamette River, is "home to the University of Oregon" (Baker A23). Some reports focus on the redneck quality of the town. One Register Guard reporter quotes a local business manager: "I hate to say it, but we are a small, redneck community" (Harwood, "Painful news" 3A). The redneck

image is further developed in The Oregonian, which notes the town's southern heritage:

Many longtime residents trace their roots to Arkansas, where the Rosboro Lumber Co. mill got started. Before World War II the company loaded up the mill on a train and headed toward Springfield, lured by 100-foot Douglas fir trees as far as the eye can see (Baker A23).

Although noting that an increasing number of residents are finding work in the fields of high technology and retail, The Oregonian argues that Springfield "still feels the loss of thousands of timber jobs and has a hard time shaking its 'redneck' past" (Baker A23). The Oregonian finds a local woman to illustrate the problems it says Springfield faces:

"Springfield is the poor society," says Jamie Tallman, 21, who lives in the Applewood Mobile Home Park two miles from Thurston High School with her husband and two children. "We're poorer than Eugene, and it's like we're looked down on" (Baker A23).

Another girl, a 15-year-old Springfield High School student, tells The Oregonian she isn't surprised shooting happened in Springfield: "If anything, I

thought we'd have this kind of thing here. We're supposed to be the white-trash school" (Duin A20).

In the Dangerous Place, Springfield's trailer parks and southern roots tie it to a redneck image it cannot escape. The New York Times labels Springfield "solidly middle-class" and focuses on the number of guns found in Springfield. The paper notes that the town "45 minutes from the hunting and camping of Willamette National Forest. . .embodies Oregon's cultural mix, where half the households have guns and half have home computers (Brooke, "Shootings in a schoolhouse: The town"). The reporter says that it isn't the guns that bother local residents:

In a setting where many people grow up with guns, it is the use of them by children to shoot classmates that has alarmed people. 'Kids used to go into the school parking lot with rifles on racks in their trucks,' said Greg Deedon, a 30-year-old Springfield Fire Department paramedic who attended high school here in the mid-1980's. (Brooke A9).

Another New York Times article also focuses on guns: "Residents here said many students are familiar with guns, because they hunt" (Eagn A1).

The Times' focus on guns allows it to develop stories that evoke the western mystique. Springfield is given an exotic air as a means of accounting for the crimes. The exotic air is one that relies on developing the town's redneck image. The redneck stories operate on the assumption that Springfield is different from urban America in fundamental ways. The difference for The Times is inherent to the western and rural locale of Springfield and the culture that mix provides. For The Times focusing on the issue of guns allows the paper to establish the strangeness of this other culture. In a similar manner, when The Oregonian emphasizes the redneck theme and chooses to interview a young mother living in a trailer park, it may serve to create an air of separation between the local residents and the paper's readers.

In the Dangerous Place, the fence also plays a dramatically different role in the incident. Here the fence is not a place of healing. It is a symbol of failure. The fence functions as a symbol of society's inability to stop Kip Kinkel from carrying out his attack:

Hundreds of people stung by the tragic shooting at Thurston High School paid their respects Friday to the dead and the injured, weaving flowers and sympathy cards into the fence that 24 hours before could not keep Kipland Phillip Kinkel and his guns off the property" (Harwood, "Floral tributes" 9A).

The New York Times has a similar view of the fence's function:

First a chain-link fence was erected outside the suburban high school here to keep out deer. Then gates were added to keep out drug dealers. Today the fence bore flowers, poems and prayers in memory of teen-agers shot by a fellow student (Brooke 9A).

A Thurston student echoes the Times' sentiment: "They try to protect us, then it comes from within" (9A).

In the Fantasy of the Dangerous Place the world of Springfield, Thurston High School, and the Kinkel household are dark places of despair and evil. The victims serve simply as largely interchangeable innocents whose role is to provide a foil for Kip Kinkel's evil. Here the victims' goodness and the heroes bravery are held in stark contrast to Kinkel's actions. In this vision, there is room for focus on one hero only: Jake Ryker. The Register-Guard quotes uses a caller to a local talk radio program to emphasize

Ryker's role: "I would really like to focus more on the hero rather than the villain" (Kidd, "Heroes" 12A).

CONSIDERING THE VISIONS

So why do these two competing versions of the story develop? The two visions each offer comprehensive world visions and for the reader who must some how understand what truly is an unfathomable act there are two ways to account for the events. If the good life doesn't appeal, then evil times are at hand to fill the void. Similarly, the papers offer reassurance to the audience. In both visions, in order to reinforce the normalcy of the audience's life, the narrative is spun out in a way that makes Kinkel's actions, especially Kinkel as a parricide, all the more abhorrent. While making Kinkel's behavior all the more abhorrent and strangely abnormal, the Dangerous place fantasy reinforces the normalcy of everyone else's life. It is as if an episode of "Jerry Springer" is unfolding in the pages of the media. Confronted by "freaks" who reveal intimate details of their dysfunctional lives, the audiences of shocking talk shows such as the "Jerry Springer" show find themselves reassured. The viewer is

able to see the alleged dysfunction of the guests and think, "How bad can my life be? I'm a lot better than those weird people."

Perhaps it isn't just the need to offer an account that will fulfill the needs of various audience members that drives the creation of the two competing visions. The Fantasy of the Good Life gives readers the opportunity to reaffirm their belief that life is basically good. If your life resembles those of the people who live in Springfield or the victims, you are able to cling to the similarity. You turn to the faith builders, you see the fence as a symbol of healing and hope, and you carry on. In a moment of irony, what helps make the Fantasy of the Good Life compelling is that Kinkel is an aberration, a mystery that cannot be understood. If your faith does not lie in the religious, you can turn to the experts and another version that presents a world far removed from the one you live in to try and explain the mystery of Kip Kinkel. In this world, guns, violence, rednecks, and poverty dominate and the culture is nothing like your own. By presenting this dichotomy, the journalists offer no final say on the shootings. Instead, they

provide both narratives as a form of perverse journalistic balance. It is a balance that never ultimately answers the question of why the shootings occurred, nor is it a balance that allows for alternative narratives.

CONCLUSION

"The only thing we know with reasonable certainty is, there is something really wrong with Kip Kinkel" Prosecutor Kent Mortimore in his sentencing recommendation.

When Kip Kinkel bought a stolen gun from another student at school, he started a chain of events that would culminate in the murder of four people. Just a day after he was suspended from school, Springfield, Oregon, and the nation were plunged into a complex drama. Bormann writes that when people are confronted with times of anxiety, with complex problems that demand an answer, and times of trouble they will develop a rhetorical vision to try and address those troubles. This study has explored the way in which journalists from three different daily newspapers developed a fantasy to try and account for Kinkel's actions

Surette writes that "the repeated message in the entertainment media is that crime is perpetrated by predatory individuals who are basically different from the rest of us and that criminality stems from individual problems. . .Media criminals have become more violent, senseless and sensational, while their

victims have become more random, helpless, and innocent (134-135).

Bormann writes that people use fantasies to regain or develop a sense of order. Media researchers Ericson, Baranek, and Chan argue that the media serves a similar function:

In the face of signs of disorder, the news provides stable meanings that allow the individual to recognize, objectively, an order that stands outside of himself or herself as a source of authority and morality. Thus, in any given story of crime, law, and justice there is a lot more at stake than the resolution of a particular tragedy or trouble. The society's system of institutional authority and morality is at stake. Ultimately a single criminal act provides the occasion not simply for a primary factual account of what happened, but for a morality play of how what happened fits into the order of things (74).

In the case of Kip Kinkel and the shootings at Thurston High School, the three newspapers, The Register-Guard, The Oregonian, and The New York Times, offered readers two complete rhetorical visions. One, the Fantasy of the Good Life Gone Awry, depicted Springfield as a rural, ideal town filled with good people. In this vision Bill and Faith Kinkel were good people who did their best with their troubled son. This

is a Springfield where an EMT, worried about his own child, cries as he helps the wounded, a logging bar's patrons hug, cry, and rally to send the Ryker boys to Disneyland like Super Bowl heroes, and pastors offer faith as an answer to the crisis. In the other vision, the Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place, Springfield is a rural, redneck town where guns are prevalent, hard times, hard knocks and abherent killers are the norm. This is, after all, the home of Diane Downs so what else could one expect? In this vision, the Kinkels are a couple in denial who fail to meet their son's needs. Kinkel is an evil killer who pretends to have a mental illness and was stopped thanks to the bravery of a rugged individual hero, Jake Ryker.

LIMITATIONS

My study faced several limitations. Perhaps the first and most obvious, was my decision to focus only on newspaper coverage. My study does not consider the effects of the television media, other print media sources, the radio or the Internet on the coverage of the shootings in Springfield. Another obvious

limitation was my focus only on the written news accounts of Springfield. Certainly a researchers could conduct a useful and interesting analysis of the visual images accompanying the newspaper articles. The image of one boy, spattered in blood, for instance, was repeatedly shown as a symbol of the violence at the school. Another frequently used photo shows Kip Kinkel with his parents and sister and the University of Oregon Duck (the university's mascot) at a U of O football game. Kristen Kinkel, Kip's sister, is in her U of O cheerleading suit. Certainly both images and the other photos that accompanied the coverage are worthy of analysis. Additionally, my study was limited to material generated by journalists. I did not considered letters to the editor or the e-mail commentary from the public that appeared in both The Register-Guard and The Oregonian. Another obvious limitation to my work was my limited time frame. The coverage of Kip Kinkel and his actions didn't stop between the murders and his sentencing. There were, of course, many stories written in the months in between the two and Kinkel and the school shooting continue to make appearances in media coverage. The decision to focus on those two time

periods was made based on two issues. The first was the simple need to limit my study to a manageable number of artifacts. The second was my desire to somehow tell the overall story of the primary incident. It seems important to have a view of both how the story begins and how the criminal phase of the story ends.

The need to limit my discussion necessarily led to some limitations. While there is little doubt that considering and understanding how other media outlets covered Kip Kinkel, attempting it in the confines of this work would have been impossible. Similarly, I chose to focus only on the images the journalists created with their words as another way of limiting my focus and material produced by readers was also excluded in part in the interest of having a tighter focus for my study. Reader-produced work was also not considered because it was not produced by a journalist. While it is true, especially with the e-mail submissions, that reader-produced work is edited, selected and arranged (to a certain extent) by editors, it is not material directly produced by journalists. My interest was not in how the community told this story

but rather how newspapers as both record-keepers and reflectors of their community told it.

Perhaps the most significant limitation to my work is my methodology. Fantasy theme analysis is not without its problems. Although it has limitations, fantasy theme analysis also has strengths. Chief among fantasy theme analysis' strengths is its usefulness in analyzing mass media communication. I did not want to do a strict content analysis, nor was I interested only in the metaphors at work in the news articles. I was seeking a methodology that would allow me to consider all of the elements that went into the telling of this story. Furthermore, I was confronted with a deeply troubling story. School shootings are horrific events and I needed a methodology designed to cope with the tragic element of Thurston and Kip Kinkel. Fantasy Theme Analysis is ideally suited to coping with rhetoric that results from times of trouble. As Bormann writes, "A viable rhetoric must. . .accommodate the community to the changes that accompany its unfolding history. The rhetoric must deal with anxiety aroused by times of trouble, with failure as well as success" ("Homo Narrans" 135).

Fantasy theme analysis also offers the critic the chance to recognize that messages are inherently dramatized. As Bormann notes, "When someone dramatizes an event he or she must select certain people to be the focus of the story and present them in a favorable light while selecting others to be presented in a more negative fashion" ("Fantasy Theme Analysis and Rhetorical Theory" 453). This interpretation has power, Bormann says, because people try to understand their world by interpreting the actions of others:

Interpreting events in terms of human action allows us to assign responsibility, to praise or to blame, to arouse and propitiate guilt, to hate, and to love. When we share a fantasy theme we make sense out of what prior to that time may have been a confusing state of affairs and we do so in common with the others who share the fantasy with us. . . . We have come to some common ground and we can talk with one another about that shared interpretation. . . . (454).

In the work that originally inspired fantasy theme analysis, Bales writes that fantasies help people create new realities where the individuals come alive:

In the fantasy of a group culture, as in a work of art, things are closer to the heart's desire than in the everyday world. The fantasy world, though it has its origins

in some original facts, is mentally formed; it tends to seem consistent, continuous, self-sufficient, and complete. It contains images of men and women, elders and children, gods and devils, animals, plants, and minerals. Images of time unfold, the seasons change, and the great adversaries of destiny loom and clash. The world of a group culture is big enough to hold a complete individual life, and yet it is completely existent within the perspective of the mind's eye. It can be traversed from the portal of heaven to the mouth of hell by mental means alone. Men fly in it more naturally than they walk" (152).

Fantasy theme analysis gives the critic the opportunity to take a group and develop an understanding of how that group creates a reality to fill some need. In this case, I was able to identify two visions that tell a complete story of Kip Kinkel and his actions. In each vision there are characters engaged in actions in settings, and each vision offers an alternative view of how things really were in Springfield in May 1998. If one accepts the argument of media researchers that the media creates reality, then I have captured two views of the reality of Kip Kinkel. These visions explain and demonstrate how the three newspapers present a coherent justification of these tragic events. This, then, was exactly what drew me to

Fantasy theme analysis. I wanted to be able to explore the possibility of the journalistic chaining out of fantasies when a community is confronted with the need to understand horrible, shocking, and tragic events.

Despite its strengths, fantasy theme analysis is not without its problems. The process set forth by Bormann is, as has been demonstrated, pitifully vague.

Researchers who have followed in his footsteps have offered little more explanation for the would-be-critic to base her work. Bormann's assertion that communities must find ways to account for times of stress, anxiety, and evil seems accurate, but his methodology seems to doom the would-be practitioner to research that rests on shaky ground. Bormann writes that rhetorical visions are "artistic." So is his methodology. The results of a fantasy theme analysis are only as good as the researcher conducting it. Perhaps that is true of any study, especially those that are quantitative in design, but fantasy theme analysis seems particularly vulnerable to misuse by the careless, lazy or thoughtless critic. Even a dedicated critic with a strong desire to produce good work may find herself

failing. Bormann writes that it is quantity that signifies the existence of a character, setting, or plotline. The problem, of course, is that sometimes quantity is not the most important element. In the hands of a particularly dense critics, a literal application of Bormann's scant instruction would lead a critic considering Kip Kinkel to an errant conclusion about the importance of some elements, take setting for example. It would have been easy for me to overlook the important role that The Oregonian's focus on Springfield as a redneck town played in the development of *The Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place*. Although The Oregonian only interviews one woman who the paper significantly identifies as living in a trailer park, that one instance speaks volumes. Why did the reporter go to a trailer park in the first place? Why mention that the woman was 21 and had two children? The critic intent on counting the number of times some set elements crop up may be blinded to the significance of more subtle material.

Bormann's emphasis on ordinal references runs the risk of missing an element that is vitally significant to the overall vision. Sometimes a setting, character,

or plotline emerges as important not based on the frequency of its appearance, but rather the amount of space lavished on it by the journalist. When a reporter devotes five or six column inches to a description of a setting or even five or six sentences (which in the world of ultra-short paragraphs favored by most newspapers can easily translate into four or five paragraphs) the critic needs to note it. While it may be relatively inconsequential in terms of ordinal weight, it may also be extremely important. Take for instance, The Oregonian's description of the logging bar. Although the bar appears only once, the amount of space and details furnished by the reporter suggests that the bar is a much more important setting than Bormann's vague ordinal focus suggests.

I am not the first critic to perceive problems with Bormann's fantasy theme analysis. The most prominent critic is Morhmann. Morhmann's strongest objection to fantasy theme analysis is what he perceives as its lack of a "substantial intellectual foundation" ("A Peroration" 310). According to Morhmann, "fantasy theme method is not a logically consistent extension of the

theoretical bases from which writes contend it derives" ("An essay" 110).

Morhmann rejects Bormann's claim that "a fantasy chain occurring in a small group will be replicated in form, content, and impact in a newscast, a letter, a speech, and any other mode of communication" ("A Peroration" 309). "Without Freud and without Bales, a vacuum exists because an easy dramatism comes to nothing, is no more than an undergraduate can elaborate in a few minutes, and we have come full circle, back to theoretical foundations" ("A Peroration" 309). Morhmann argues that the elements of plot, character, and setting Bormann offers the critic are too limiting, noting that "fantasy theme dramas usually are extraordinarily ordinary" ("A Peroration" 311). That ordinariness reveals itself as "[h]eroes and villains trod the boards through simple plots, and little sense of true dramatic action emerges" ("A Peroration" 311).

Fantasy theme analysis also suffers from problems with its terminology. Bormann, Cragan and Shields note that "some critics have characterized SCT as jargonistic, ambiguous, and containing slippery terminology" (278). Despite noting the criticism, in

the almost three decades Bormann has been writing about fantasy theme analysis, Bormann has done little to rectify the vagueness of his terminology. Given his discussion in "Defense of Symbolic Convergence Theory" it appears that Bormann, along with Cragan and Shields, sees his terminology working to build a progression. In other words, the three basic terms of his method, fantasy theme, fantasy type, and rhetorical visions build into one another. Fantasy themes (in the case of Kinkel such phrases as "School shootings" or "Thurston") are what "sparks the fantasy chain" (Bormann, Cragan and Shields 281). Fantasy types, the characters, settings, and plot-lines, are developed from the themes. The themes and fantasy types can give way to a rhetorical vision or a "unified putting-together of the various themes and types that gives the participants a broader view of things" (Bormann, Cragan and Shields 281).

It is clear that fantasy theme analysis suffers from some significant problems. The method's problems do not, however, mean that meaningful work is impossible to produce using it. What my study has revealed is how a modified approach to fantasy produces a reasonable

account of rhetorical vision. The critic who expands her understanding of fantasy type to include moments of dramatic content will develop a stronger rhetorical vision. This type of approach, one that takes in to account a richer sense of characters, settings, and plotlines, offers more depth than a simplistic approach to fantasy theme analysis may indicate.

I would hesitate, however, to assert that I could make any prediction about the newspaper readers' reactions or beliefs based on their participation in the visions surrounding the shootings at Thurston High School. I make no predictive claim with my work. I am simply an artist and my work, like an impressionistic canvas, captures only one scene of many possible perspectives.

What my work and my use of fantasy theme analysis have revealed, however, is more than just the faults of Fantasy Theme Analysis. If my work demonstrates the problems of Fantasy Theme Analysis, it also reveals its strengths. Kip Kinkel wasn't just Springfield's problem or Oregon's problem. There was a sense that he was America's problem. One person e-mailed The Register-Guard and declared "our schools are killing fields"

(Dreger 9A). Her characterization is not statistically warranted, but regardless, the sense of moral panic that accompanies school shootings makes them a problem that has influence outside of the local community facing the tragedy. Fantasy theme analysis gives the critic the means to discover how the community responds to "this time of trouble."

Fantasy theme analysis enabled me to take seemingly disparate examples and weave them together into a coherent account for how The Register-Guard, The Oregonian, and The New York Times told the story of Kip Kinkel. What emerged were two distinct visions, each complete and compelling. Both visions are presented by all three papers, although The New York Times presents far more evidence to support the Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place. Why do all three papers present such similar visions? Perhaps it is because there is ultimately no answer for what drove Kip Kinkel to kill his parents and two of his classmates. The mystery that is Kip Kinkel forces the media to become a place for public contest and narrative wish fulfillment. In an attempt to answer the elusive question of why, the papers present the two sides in a

struggle to find meaning out of mystery. Fantasy theme analysis allows this mystery and the competing answers to its questions to emerge clearly for the critic to see, consider and understand.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Another possible limitation to my work is also an area researchers should turn their attention towards: my work is limited to Springfield, but there have been a number of other school shootings. These school shootings, especially Columbine, which probably generated the most media coverage, are ripe for analysis by both rhetorical and media critics. My work suggests a strong need for journalists and the community to account for why these incidents occur and how they are reported. Understanding how other communities and other media outlets have told that story would contribute to our understanding of how communication functions in times of great stress and great anxiety. The story of Kip Kinkel also still has room for research. First, there are the stories from these three newspapers that fell out of the time period I explored (including those still being written).

Second, there remains a surplus of media coverage this study has not addressed. Both would provide critics with great scope for exploration, analysis, and interpretation. Our understanding of how the media shapes our worldview and our understanding of how moral panics evolve are also areas that additional explorations of school shootings, juvenile crime and violent crime in general are all elements worthy of research and further discussion.

Two school shootings particularly seem to demand further study. The first is Columbine. Columbine raises a number of issues for researchers to study. The first is the fact that live video was broadcast of students fleeing the shooters, in Springfield, the shooting was over by the time the media arrived. The second issue Columbine raises is the difference between how it and the Thurston story ended. Although he is appealing his sentence as this is being written, Kip Kinkel plead guilty to his crimes and was sentenced to serve 112 years in prison, without the possibility of parole. The two Columbine shooters turned their guns on themselves. There was no trial, no plea agreement, no sentencing, and no chance for experts to examine their psyches and

present arguments or explanations for their actions. Future research should investigate the difference in coverage that results when the killers are themselves dead. The Pearl shooting also bears further scrutiny because the shooter, Luke Woodham, like Kinkel, killed his mother. An examination into how the media tells the story of matricide would also offer an avenue for researchers to pursue.

The Kip Kinkel story also raised two other issues for researchers to consider concerning the media's treatment of children. The first issue raised by Kinkel is the issue of mental health. The Surgeon General reported this year that mental illness is increasing in children in the United States. According to David Satcher's report, 1 in 10 children and adolescents suffer from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment. According to the report, estimates indicate that in any given year fewer than one in five of these children receives treatment. Research into the way the media copes with mentally ill children should also provide researchers with ample material to consider. Another important issue raised by the Kinkel case is society's treatment of juvenile offenders.

Kinkel was tried as an adult for his crimes although he was only 15 at the time of the crimes. Research into how the media covers juvenile crime in general, as well as how it covers juvenile killers, is also an avenue for future research.

Whatever path future research may take, the three newspapers' coverage of the shootings at Thurston High School undoubtedly played an important role in the way the newspapers' readers came to see the shootings at Thurston High School and perhaps school shootings in general. Despite its weaknesses, fantasy theme analysis offers a way for the critic to gain critical insight into the characters, setting, and plotlines at work in the newspaper's coverage. These themes then gave way to two rhetorical visions: The Fantasy of the Good Life Gone Awry and The Fantasy of the Dangerous Boy, Dangerous Place. These visions offered all of us impacted by the shootings the chance to find some way of understanding the tragedy and violence that swept through a home, a school, a community, a state, and a nation.

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